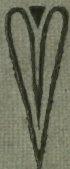


PLAIN
COMMENTARIES

THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING
TO ST MARK



BY THE REV
G. M. MAC DERMOTT. M.A.



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CONTENTS OF THE GOSPEL

CHAPTER 1, VERSES 1-13.

John the Baptist and our LORD. The Temptation.

CHAPTER 1, VERSE 14, TO CHAPTER 7, VERSE 23.

Our Lord's Works in East Galilee.—Proclaiming the Kingdom. Call of the Disciples. Miracles of Healing. Charged with Breaking the Law, and Consequent Opposition of the Pharisees and Scribes. Parables of the Kingdom. Miracles showing our LORD's Power over Nature : Stilling the Storm, and Walking on the Sea. Miracle of Providence : Feeding the Five Thousand.

CHAPTER 7, VERSE 24, TO CHAPTER 9, VERSE 37.

Our Lord's Works in North Galilee.—Miracles of Healing ; Feeding the Four Thousand. Warnings against the Pharisees' Teaching. Prediction of the Passion. Transfiguration.

CHAPTER 10, VERSES 1-31.

Our Lord's Works in Peræa.—Teaching respecting Marriage. Blesses Little Children.

CHAPTER 10, VERSE 32, TO CHAPTER 15, VERSE 47.

Our Lord's Last Journey to Jerusalem and Crucifixion.—The Anointing at Bethany. Palm Sunday. Holy Week. Good Friday.

CHAPTER 16.

The Resurrection.—Our LORD's Appearances. Commission to His Disciples to Preach the Gospel. His Ascension.

Plain Commentaries

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK

BY

G. M. MAC DERMOTT, M.A., L.Th.

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PREFACE

I HAVE long felt the need of a 'Plain Commentary,' and every parish priest whom I have consulted tells me that his experience is the same. The spread of education has enormously increased the number of readers. Popular literature of all kinds has been produced to cater for those classes which are now entering upon their inheritance of learning. But commentaries on the Bible suitable for ordinary readers do not seem to exist. Such a commentary must be low in price, simple and popular in language, explanatory rather than devotional. The point of view should be that the Bible is the text-book and reference-book of the teaching Church, the infallible witness, but not the sole authority for her teaching. As regards the imagined conflict between science and religion, the commentary ought to assume that there is an underlying unity between the revelation given by God through His Church and His Word and the results of the study of Nature. I think there is a very widespread demand for a commentary on these lines. If this work should meet that demand, I hope to continue the 'Plain Commentary' on other books of the Bible.

In some of the comments an indirect reference has been made to the principles of Biblical criticism. It might be helpful, therefore, if a few words were here said about the 'Higher Criticism.'

There should be no objection at all to the criticism of the Bible. Criticism is a test of truth. Why fear it? Criticism will have done much good even if it only calls attention to the fact that the Bible record is not our *sole* authority for the truths on which the Christian religion rests. The living Church has handed down her creeds from the earliest times, and we accept Christian teaching (doctrine) at her mouth. These creeds deal with historical facts which we could accept even if we had the authority of the Church alone. To overthrow Christianity it is required (amongst other things) to be shown that the Church was founded on a lie; rapidly spread in spite of the lie, and even by virtue of the lie; and that she flourishes and still spreads on this basis of a lie!

But the Church has an ally. She appeals to the Bible as offering a *support* to her creeds. It is, therefore, important that the Bible should be most thoroughly examined and tried. This examination, or criticism, has been of the most searching character. So much the better. An earnest soul longs for

truth above everything: an earnest Christian must, therefore, welcome all fair effort to test the truth of Scripture.

Should the Bible be criticised just like other books? Yes, if it be possible! You will find, however, that the more you try and criticise it like any other book, the more evident it will appear that it is unlike any other book. Indeed, the amount of criticism which has been devoted to the Bible, by friend and foe alike, shows that it is not on the same plane as other books.

It is impossible to approach the Bible without having some views on religion. If a man has a settled conviction that there is no GOD, and consequently no revelation from GOD, it is waste of time for him to criticise the Bible. He can settle the matter (to *his* satisfaction) by saying 'he knows better than what is written in Scripture.' It can be left to him to explain how he has arrived at his infallible knowledge.

What can be fairly asked from a critic is that he must not consider it unreasonable to believe there is a GOD, and to believe that GOD revealed Himself to man. Such an one can approach the task of criticism with some degree of impartiality.

The aim of criticism is to show whether a book is authentic (true), and whether it is genuine (has the right author's name attached to it). Now, there are two methods of criticism:

1. Criticism by *external* evidence.
2. Criticism by *internal* evidence.

External evidence is obtained by gathering together all the facts which may be discovered about a book *outside* the book itself. For instance, I observe that the second Gospel is quoted by the early Church as an authority on Christian teaching. The name of the author is given as Mark. Such quotation is part of the external evidence which helps me to conclude that it is a truthful narrative, and is rightly called 'the Gospel according to St. Mark.'

Internal evidence is obtained by examining the book *itself*. I look inside. I see what facts can be gathered about its truthfulness and its author from the contents of the book. It is this method of criticism which is called the 'Higher'* Criticism. It might also be termed 'criticism by common sense.'

The principles of this kind of criticism are, roughly, three:

1. Observe and analyse the style of the writing.
2. Notice any historical allusions, or references to localities.
3. Try and form a general idea of the development of religious thought which the book presents to us.

Now, when these rules or principles are applied to the Bible, they yield most interesting evidence in *its* favour. The enemies

* The term 'Higher' is applied to this kind of criticism to distinguish it from 'the Lower' Criticism—the criticism of the text of the Scriptures.

of Christianity often speak of the Higher Criticism as being destructive and dissolvent in its results. In the hands of prejudiced persons it may seem so; and it may really be destructive of certain idolatrous notions of the Bible which make ignorant folk treat a printed book as though it were God Himself. But, on the whole, the Higher Criticism is edifying, and tends to strengthen one's belief in the Scriptures.

There are, it is true, many startling theories put forth as results of the Higher Criticism; but as these are generally balanced by equally startling theories which contradict them, we need not notice either. They are like those fascinating sums in vulgar fractions, where one factor cancels another! These theories, which are sometimes popularised and put forward as if they were well-recognised facts, have, however, this value: they clear the ground for the real solid work which will abide.

But I propose to briefly consider one of the Gospels under the test of the Higher Criticism, employing the three rules referred to above.

As I have applied these principles to the Gospel of St. Mark in the Introduction and elsewhere, it would be better here to take St. Luke's Gospel as an example. This Gospel also has the advantage of affording a very clear illustration of the method of the Higher Criticism.

From external evidence we learn that the third Gospel was written by Luke, who also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. In St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (4. 14) he is referred to as 'Luke, the beloved physician.' Our task now is to see whether the Higher Criticism bears out these statements. First, we observe and analyse the style of the Gospel which bears his name. We discover as follows:

1. It is the production of a man of education.
2. Many words are those which a physician would employ, but which one who has no particular knowledge of medicine is not likely to use.
3. There are many words and phrases which are also used by St. Paul in his Epistles.
4. The writer tells us of circumstances attending our Lord's birth which are not given in the other Gospels.

Now, all these *facts*, got from the book itself, agree with the external evidence. Thus, Luke, as a physician, would be a man of education, and would naturally use medical terms. Also, from the Acts we find that Luke was a companion of Paul (Acts 20. 6), and we might expect that he would unconsciously pick up many Pauline words, etc. The Blessed Virgin Mary would be inclined to tell a *physician* the full circumstances of our Lord's birth, and that fits in well with 4.

We can also apply the second principle of the Higher Criticism to this Gospel. There are many historical allusions in the Gospel (2. 1-4, 3. 1, 2). It must be carefully noticed that the history of Palestine at that period was very complex. There

were native princes and Roman governors, native officials and Roman officials. Unless a person lived in those times he would, when writing of the period, be very likely to make mistakes. But St. Luke has always been found to have truly represented the historical background of that date. Also, he speaks of Jerusalem as still standing, and evidently knows nothing about its destruction. These facts bear out the external evidence as to the time when the Gospel was written—viz., before A.D. 70, this being the year of the destruction of Jerusalem.

As regards the third principle, it is sufficient to say that the religious teachings in this Gospel present an enormous advance on the Old Testament ideas. But the picture given of the disciples shows that the followers of JESUS CHRIST were not yet organised, as we find they were at a later period. These *facts* help us to fix within certain limits the time when St. Luke's Gospel was written, and this evidence agrees with the external evidence as to the date of the book.

We hope enough has been said to show how valuable an ally we have in the Higher Criticism. We need not be afraid of it. It may cause unsettlement in some minds, but that will soon pass away. Some have brought it forward to curse the book which contains God's word, but it will in the end altogether bless it. The Higher Criticism conducted in a *sane* manner only clenches the view that the Gospel history is worthy the belief of every reasonable person. Accepting the Gospel as true leads us further. We are irresistibly drawn to place ourselves at the feet of Him who said: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (St. Matt. 11. 28).

In concluding these remarks, I wish to add that the whole of this work has been submitted to my friend and neighbour, the Rev. E. H. Polehampton, M.A., Rector of Little Ellingham, formerly Vice-Principal of Lichfield Theological College, who has kindly made suggestions which in several cases have been adopted. It is mainly owing to the encouragement received from him that I have ventured to undertake the production of this commentary.

NORTH WALSHAM, NORFOLK,

1907.

COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK

INTRODUCTION

Gospel.—The two deepest longings of our race have been these : to know GOD and to become holy. There are many ways in which men have gradually come to know GOD, but JESUS CHRIST alone reveals GOD to us with fullness. There are also many means which have been adopted to get rid of the evil in our nature, but JESUS CHRIST alone offers sure and certain means ; for grace, or GOD's holiness working within us, is freely supplied by our LORD.

It is no wonder, then, that the history of JESUS CHRIST's life, and the story of the redemption made by Him, is called the Gospel, a word which is derived from two old English words meaning ' good tidings.'

The Earliest Gospel Narratives.—The Apostles accompanied our LORD on His ministry, which lasted about three years. During that time He must have repeated His sayings to different audiences. These sayings—His doctrines, or teachings—became impressed on the Apostles' memory. They would be sure to have good memories, for men were much more accustomed then to learn ' by heart ' than they are now. There were no cheap books of reference (such as we now have) which could be referred to as treasure-houses of information ; their memory was their storehouse, and, consequently, it was well accustomed to being filled with facts for future use.

Not only were the Apostles careful to retain what they heard from our LORD : they also practised telling it out again. There were times when they were sent to preach about Him, and after His ascension they began their regular mission. Everywhere they spread the story of His life and teaching. What one did not fully remember another did. They also heard one another preach, and by continual repetition the Gospel narrative took a set form. If you have heard anyone frequently tell a story, you will notice that he uses almost the same words every time he repeats his tale. So the Apostles' teaching assumed a particular shape. With little variety, the Gospel was spread in the same words.

After a few years some enterprising folk began to *write* the Gospel story. The Apostles could not be everywhere at once,

and the next best thing to hearing one of them was to *read* the Gospel. But these narratives were not always correct. Probably some were written by men who had only heard the Apostles once or twice, and then wrote down what they remembered. When their memory failed, they added little bits of their own. The Apostles soon saw that it was necessary to issue authentic ('authentic' means *true*) accounts of the Gospel. We owe one to St. Matthew. St. Peter influenced a friend of his—St. Mark—to write another. St. Luke, who was St. Paul's fellow-traveller and friend, wrote a third. Many years afterwards St. John, now an old man, wrote a fourth. St. John, 'the beloved disciple,' treasured up our LORD's *words* more closely than anyone. His object was to supply explanations which time had shown to be necessary. As an eyewitness with the most intimate knowledge of his Master's mind, he was specially fitted to do this.

Which were the true Gospels? This was a question which demanded careful attention. It did not, however, much disturb the Church at first. The truth was handed on by the *living voice* of the Church. The Apostles preached, their successors taught what they had heard from the Apostles, and so on. It must never be forgotten that the *living Church has always witnessed the same story*. The historical facts in our Creed have been handed on from generation to generation. The Apostles' Creed was, indeed, so called because it contained the teaching of the Apostles. If all the written Gospels had perished, we should still have the living Church with her creeds to fall back upon. The Church could not have spread and accomplished such marvellous works had she gone about with a lie in her mouth. The Church is 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (1 Tim. 3. 15).

However, the question had to be decided as to the relative trustworthiness of the various written Gospels. Now, there is a doctrine, about which you may have heard, called 'the survival of the fittest.' If we apply this doctrine to writings, we might call it 'the survival of the *truest*.' 'Truth will out,' is an old saying. Consequently, people pointed out the startling nature of some of the stories told in the false Gospels, and made inquiry from those who could speak with authority. Gradually the mind of the Church settled upon four Gospel narratives as being genuine (having the right author's name) and authentic (true). All the other false, or partly false, Gospels were kept in concealment, and were, therefore, called 'Apocryphal,' which means 'hidden away.' They may also have been called 'Apocryphal' because their origin was hidden, or obscure.

For a long time the Church as a whole made no particular pronouncement about the Gospels. The narratives of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John had gained a firm hold from the very first. They were the productions of men who could write with the best authority.

By sheer force of their own weight our four Gospels took

their place of pre-eminence. When, in the fourth century, lists of what writings formed the Canon (rule) of Scripture were drawn up, the necessity for such a rule might be said to have passed away.

The following references to the Gospels may be of interest :

Justin Martyr (A.D. 140-150) speaks of the 'memoirs of the Apostles . . . which are called Gospels.' St. Mark is quoted from as the 'memoir of Peter' (but see footnote on p. 93 of Salmon's 'Introduction to N.T.').

Tatian (A.D. 170) made a compilation, or a continuous story, out of the four Gospels.

Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons (A.D. 177), quotes our Gospels.

The Muratorian Fragment, a very old writing, probably of about A.D. 170, or earlier, mentions our four Gospels.

As regards St. Mark's Gospel, there is a very interesting passage in a work called 'Exposition of Oracles of the LORD,' written by Papias, who was born between A.D. 60 and 70. It runs as follows : 'Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately everything that he remembered, without, however, recording in order what was either said or done by CHRIST. For neither did he hear the LORD nor did he follow Him, but afterwards, as I said, [attended] Peter. . . . So, then, Mark made no mistake, while he thus wrote down some things as he remembered them ; for he made it his one care not to omit anything that he heard, or to set down any false statement therein.'

Were the Four Gospel Stories ever Altered ?—This is a very important question, and may be answered by a very emphatic 'No.' It is hardly likely that Gospels bearing the names of such authoritative writers would be altered. Just imagine what would be said and done in one of our parishes if the clergyman, when reading the lessons, gave a different version of the Gospel story ! Yet this does not adequately convey to our minds the state of feeling in regard to Sacred Writ in olden time. St. Augustine (born A.D. 354, Bishop A.D. 393) tells us of a certain Bishop who, reading the chapter about Jonah's gourd, ventured to substitute one word for another, and such a tumult was roused that if the Bishop had persevered he would have been left without a congregation.

Some talk about the people who lived in the early days of Christianity as if they were most credulous, and believed anything which was placed before them. This was very far from being the case. Here is an instance of what they required in a writer. Theophilus of Antioch (A.D. 180) says : 'Writers ought either to have been eyewitnesses themselves of the things they assert, or at least have accurately learned them from those who had seen them. For those who write uncertain things do nothing but beat the air.'

The Apostles themselves were actually upbraided because of

their unwillingness to believe. Thomas would not even accept the testimony of his brethren.

We may take it that the Gospel was preached and written by men who had most carefully assured themselves of its truth. Furthermore, when once they had accepted the truth, they used the utmost care to see that it was handed down unimpaired. They even invoked a curse on anyone who ventured to alter their writings. For instance, at the end of the Revelation of St. John we read: 'I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.' Would anyone, making a copy of this writing, be likely to alter it purposely?

To show how carefully the Bible manuscripts were copied it is only necessary to compare the version, or translation, which is authorised to be read in churches with the Revised Version made some years ago (1880-1884). The Authorised Version was made nearly three hundred years ago (1611). Since then some very old manuscripts have been discovered, and have been made use of in producing the Revised Version. Some of the alterations in the Revised Version were made because the English language has grown, and more than two hundred words in the Authorised Version have changed their meaning. Moreover, scholars now understand ancient languages better than they did. These two causes will account for many of the slight alterations you will notice in the Revised Version. But some of these alterations arise owing to the different readings found in those manuscripts which have been used in the Revised Version and not in the Authorised. Notwithstanding this, there is not an alteration in the Gospel story which is of any importance whatever. It remains substantially the same as it always has been.

Early Christian writers quote the Gospels, just as a modern preacher quotes texts, and their quotations always substantially agree with the Gospels as we know them.

Much more might be said on this point, but enough has been brought forward to show that we have the same Gospels as those which were originally published and accepted by the earliest followers of CHRIST.

The Date of St. Mark's Gospel.—We do not know the exact date, but we may be sure it was written before A.D. 70. In this year Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans and utterly destroyed. Our LORD's coming to judgment on that city then took place. Such a fulfilment of His words would most probably be referred to directly or indirectly if it had occurred before St. Mark's Gospel were written. At any rate, in some

way or other we should find traces in the Gospel that the writer knew of this awful catastrophe. But no hint is dropped that he was aware of it ; therefore, we take it, from this and other reasons, that he wrote the Gospel *before* the siege of Jerusalem.

Who was St. Mark ?—Marcus, or Mark, was his Latin name ; his Jewish name was John. He is mentioned in Acts 12. 12, 25 ; 13. 5, 13 ; 15. 39 ; Col. 4. 10 ; Philem. 24 ; 2 Tim. 4. 11.

He was the son of Mary, a Jewish lady who lived at Jerusalem (see Acts 12. 12). He was also nephew or cousin to Barnabas, the great friend of St. Paul.

He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their journey, and when he departed from them at Pamphylia was the occasion of a ' sharp contention ' between these two Apostles. However, the quarrel was made up, as we read of Mark being a comfort to Paul during his imprisonment at Rome.

Tradition states that St. Mark visited Egypt, founded the Church at Alexandria, and died by martyrdom.

For whom did St. Mark Write His Gospel ?—Most probably for Gentiles (the word means ' all who are not Jews '). Consequently, we observe that he explains words and Jewish customs which would not be understood by Gentiles, and all reference to the Jewish law is omitted.

Language in which St. Mark's Gospel was Written.—Most of the dwellers in Palestine could speak their native tongue, and also Greek, which was commonly used by all educated people throughout the Roman Empire. We can draw a comparison between Palestine and Wales. In Wales they still talk their native tongue, but nearly all the Welsh can also speak English, which is the common language throughout our Empire. As St. Mark wrote his Gospel more particularly for the Gentiles, he used the Greek language. He would thus reach a larger circle of readers. It may be added that the reason why Greek was so well known was owing to the conquests of Alexander the Great, who founded a world-empire, and wherever he went left his language behind.

Who is to Interpret or Explain the Gospel Writings ?—It was the living Church which gave us our Gospels. The Church existed before the Gospels or any of the New Testament was written. Christians turned to the authorised teachers of the Church for explanation of Christian doctrine. The authorised teachers put forward what the Church generally accepted. The Church as a whole, according to the promise of our LORD, was guided into truth by the HOLY GHOST.

The Church, we repeat, gave us our Gospels, and therefore we can safely turn to the Church to explain them.

Thank God ! there are portions of the Gospels which are so clear that the humblest mind can understand. Passages which are of vast practical importance, and which deal with our every-

day life, can be readily mastered by any earnest and prayerful believer.

But, from the nature of the case, there are many passages that require special knowledge to interpret, and which must be carefully balanced against other portions of Scripture.

It is a curious fact that many worthy folk have received their Bible from the hands of the Church, yet refuse to receive the Church's interpretation of it.

If a man wished to study medicine, he would read the recognised works on the subject. Doubtless, he would understand a good deal of the writings without aid. But in what direction would he turn when he found a difficult passage? To a quack, or to some self-authorised teacher, or to some few medical men who had cut themselves off from the main body of practitioners? Surely not. He would go to an authorised teacher of medicine, and would accept the interpretation of the writing which has been generally received.

There is no need to apply this illustration: you can do it for yourself. We would, however, impress upon you the fact that the Gospel was written eighteen and a half centuries ago, in a foreign language, and refers to manners and customs very different from our own. One who explains the difficulties of the Gospels ought at least to have a knowledge of their original language, and must possess an acquaintance with the history of the Jews and of the times during which the narratives were written. Moreover, any interpretation given must be received with very great caution unless it is one which has been generally received by the Church.

We do not doubt that fuller and deeper explanations of Holy Writ will be revealed as time goes on. The HOLY SPIRIT is still guiding the Church into all truth. Each age will throw a new light on to the old faith. But the old faith will be *illuminated*, *not altered*. The Church's interpretations may be fulfilled—that is, *filled full*, or deepened—but they will not be changed. Therefore, in the following comments made on St. Mark's Gospel the guiding principle underlying them is this: the Church is the interpreter of Holy Writ.

There will not be found herein such pious reflections as are common to most commentaries. The best and most helpful pious reflections are those which spring from our own hearts under the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT. It is hoped that by explaining difficulties which must occur to one who only knows the English version, and by giving information on many points connected with the Gospel, this commentary may stimulate interest in, and prove an aid to, healthy meditation on our LORD's life and words. The Gospel narratives are of vast importance as a true picture of ancient history, and as wonderful masterpieces of literature; but their essential worth consists in their portrayal of Him who is the Light of the World and the Way to eternal life.

EXPLANATIONS

1. MS. is used to mean manuscript. MSS.=manuscripts. A copy of the Bible written by hand on parchment (the skin of an animal), is called a manuscript. There are a great many old manuscripts of the Bible. The four oldest are as follows :

The *Vatican* MS., now in the Pope's Palace at Rome—written, probably, about the middle of the fourth century.

The *Sinaitic* MS., now at St. Petersburg, so called because it was found in a convent on Mount Sinai—a fourth-century MS.

The *Alexandrine* MS., now in the British Museum, London—a fifth-century MS.

The *Ephraem* MS., now in Paris—a fifth-century MS.

The original MSS.—those written by the Apostles themselves—are lost. During the times of persecution MSS. were hidden away, and when brought out again some were, no doubt, found to be affected by the damp. Others, by frequent handling, were much worn. Consequently, fresh copies were made from time to time. It is interesting to note that, although these copies were made in different parts of the world and by different writers, there is not any important variation between the MSS. If any alteration does occur, it is called a '*different reading*.' For illustration, we may take verse 2 of the first chapter of St. Mark. The words 'in the prophets,' according to another reading in the MSS., should be 'in Isaiah, the prophet.' The words quoted are in the Book of Isaiah. They are also found in Malachi. Whichever reading we accept as the original one—that is, the one actually written by St. Mark himself—it makes no difference to the truth of the Gospel.

2. **I.e.** means 'that is.'

3. **Story**.—The word 'story' is used throughout this work with the meaning 'true tale.' It is equal to history or narrative of fact.

4. **Viz.**—This is short for the Latin *videlicet*, and means 'namely.'

5. **A.V.**—These initials refer to the Authorised Version, or translation, of the Scriptures in the year 1611. **R.V.** means the Revised Version, made in 1880-1884.

6. **A.D.**—These letters stand for the Latin *Anno Domini*, 'in the year of our LORD.' **B.C.** means 'before CHRIST.'

NOTE.—Many expressions occur several times in the Gospel. An index is provided at the end, and this will guide anyone who refers to it, so that he may know where to find a comment on any particular expression. For instance, the name 'JESUS' is repeated in many places; the comment on the word is to be found on p. 14.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK

CHAPTER 1

THE beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God ;
2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

1. Gospel. 'Gospel' means the glad tidings concerning our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus. This name is another form of Joshua, and signifies 'Saviour.' Names in the Bible nearly always tell us something of the person who bears them. The word 'JESUS,' therefore, discloses our LORD's great office as Saviour of mankind (see St. Matt. 1. 21).

Christ. This is a title rather than a name, and means 'anointed.' Sometimes our LORD is called *the* CHRIST, because He was the Messiah, the anointed of GOD. 'CHRIST' (Greek), 'Messiah' (Hebrew), both mean 'anointed.' 'Anoint' means to set apart for a particular office by the rite of pouring oil on the head or the body. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed to their special callings. Our LORD was a Prophet, inasmuch as He spoke on behalf of GOD ; He was a Priest, for He offered up the one perfect sacrifice ; He was a King, as He founded a kingdom which shall never pass away. No better title could be found for Him than CHRIST.

2. In the prophets. In some MSS., 'in Isaiah the prophet.' The words are taken from Mal. 3. 1 and Isa. 40. 3.

3. Prepare ye the way of the Lord. It was customary in the East to send a runner on in front to announce the coming of his master. In the case of an important person, such as a prince, not only did the people leave a free passage, but the roads were patched up to allow an easy journey. John the Baptist was our LORD's forerunner.

4. Wilderness. A wild place, rocky, uncultivated, and left to nature. The region where John preached was not far from Jerusalem, and stretched down to the Dead Sea.

Baptism of repentance. The Jews were accustomed to religious washings and purifications. Indeed, washing has in all ages been used as a religious symbol. It would be very appropriate in Palestine. The dust and heat were overpowering

5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins ; and he did eat locusts and wild honey ;

7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

8 I indeed have baptized you with water : but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

sometimes, and a good bath made one a new man, so to speak. The baptism of John symbolised a fresh start in life. It was the baptism of repentance, and what was included in repentance is shown by his addresses given in St. Luke 3. 8-14. Repentance evidently was not merely sorrow, but it was that 'whereby we forsake sin' (see Catechism).

Remission of sins. Forgiveness of sin. The word translated 'remission' means a letting go, 'deliverance from.'

5. Were all baptized of him. After more than four hundred years a prophet of God had arisen. The people came out in crowds, and all classes were represented. They were met with stern rebukes, and the keynote of the kingdom of God was sounded. It was to be a kingdom of righteousness. All sin must be confessed and forsaken.

6. John was clothed, etc. He wore a rough hair-cloth robe (compare the covering of a horsehair chair) and a leathern waistband. John's appearance would remind the people of Elijah and other prophets.

Locusts and wild honey. The locust is an insect like a grasshopper. They were dried and pounded into a powder. Sometimes they were made into cakes, and eaten with salt or butter. The honey may have been a sweet gum oozing from certain trees and shrubs ; or, more probably, it was the product of the bees which swarmed in clefts in the rocks and hollows of trees.

7. One mightier than I—i.e., JESUS CHRIST.

Latchet. From 'latch,' that which fastens. The word 'latchet' was applied to the thong by which the sandal was fastened. It was a slave's duty to unfasten the sandals of a great person. John wished to divert their attention from himself to our LORD, and clearly pointed out the vast difference between them in importance.

8. Holy Ghost. 'GHOST' is the same as 'SPIRIT.' The literal translation is 'in water and in HOLY SPIRIT.' The outward element in which they were baptized was water ; the personal influence in which they were to find themselves after the baptism of CHRIST was the HOLY SPIRIT.

9. In those days. The events were so recent that the writer does not trouble to give a date. Elsewhere he mentions Pilate,

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him :

11 And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Herod, Caiaphas, and other historical personages, so that indirectly we know what time he refers to. From passages in the other Gospels we see that our LORD was thirty years old.

Nazareth of Galilee. A little village midst the hills of Lebanon. The early Christians were sometimes called 'Nazarenes' in scorn.

Was baptized of John in Jordan. Probably our LORD was dipped under the water. The fonts in our churches are adapted for complete immersion of infants, and if parents desired it their wish would be granted.* But in our climate it would be inconvenient, not to say dangerous, to practise complete immersion. The *quantity* of the outward sign is not important ; it is enough if it be the element ordained for the holy rite.

There was no need for our LORD to be baptized, as far as the Mosaic law was concerned. We know from St. Matthew's Gospel John would have forbidden JESUS. It did not seem fit that the sinless One should receive that rite which symbolised cleansing from sin. But God had required that His people should accept baptism at the hand of His prophet as the introduction of a new order of things. Our LORD made Himself one with them, sinful though they were, and therefore considered it His duty to be baptized.

No Christian should talk slightingly of rites and ceremonies. CHRIST Himself was circumcised, presented in the Temple, and baptized. We must not pretend to be more spiritual than He. He never belittled forms, but sternly rebuked *formality* and *hypocrisy*—very different things.

10. He saw the heavens opened. Our LORD's baptism marked the beginning of His ministry. At such a crisis the hindrance of the flesh was for a moment brushed aside, and spiritual regions became visible to Him.

The Spirit like a dove. The word 'like' should be 'as' (see R.V.), and shows that the SPIRIT did not become an actual dove. The dove is the symbol of purity and peace. Probably we are to understand a dove-like flame.

11. The voice from heaven. The doctrine of the Trinity states that there are three persons in the one substance of the Godhead. By 'substance' is meant the sum total of the attributes of God. The attributes of God are His eternal nature, His almightiness, and so on. Here we have a picture of the doctrine. God the FATHER speaks from heaven ; God the SON looks up from earth ; God the HOLY SPIRIT connects them both, 'proceeding from the FATHER and the SON.'

* In the case of adults, provision could be made for immersion ; indeed, in some new churches there are immersion fonts for adults as well as infants.

12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan ; and was with the wild beasts ; and the angels ministered unto him.

14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

The doctrine of the Trinity of Persons (*not* Trinity of Gods, which would be absurd) is Scriptural and very logical. We cannot think of a being without also thinking of something or somebody with that being. We cannot imagine a being with the power of love without supposing some one for him to love. Before creation, whom did God love ? Surely, He always had an object for His love in the person of the only-begotten SON. And the eternal link between the two was and is the HOLY SPIRIT.

Thou art My beloved Son. Literally, Thou art *the* SON of Mine, *the* beloved. Our LORD was the SON of GOD in a way which no one else is. We are sons by adoption. He is *the* SON from all eternity.

12. The Spirit driveth Him. 'The SPIRIT casteth Him out into the wilderness.' It is GOD's will that we are tempted. It would be no good our having the gift of free-will unless we were tried. We might just as well be machines if there were no possibility of our going wrong. Therefore, the first Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden, but was found wanting. The second Adam—JESUS—was cast into the wilderness ; but He overcame the tempter. It is to be noticed that our LORD willingly yielded Himself to the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT. He would not in any way assert His superiority to ordinary man. He complied with all our limitations, even in this respect of being tempted.

13. Tempted of Satan. Satan means 'the enemy.' Notice, that although God wills man to be tempted, *God never tempts us*, but the enemy—Satan—does.

With the wild beasts. St. Mark is very fond of detail. Sometimes it is in little matters like these that a story can be proved untrue. But although this Gospel is full of details, no want of harmony can be detected, no inaccuracy can be proved.

The angels. The messengers of GOD. We know from another source (1 Pet. i. 12) that these spiritual beings were profoundly interested in all that our LORD did.

14. John put in prison. See notes on Chapter 6.

Galilee. The Romans at this period ruled nearly the whole of the civilised world. Palestine formed part of their Empire. They divided it into three provinces, and Galilee was the northern province, and the most populous.

The Gospel of the kingdom of God. The good tidings not only tell of a King, but also of His kingdom. Members of His kingdom are called by various names, such as 'the brethren,' 'believers,' 'elect,' 'saints,' 'Christians,' 'the being-saved,' etc.

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand : repent ye, and believe the gospel.

16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea : for they were fishers.

17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

19 And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

The rite of admission to the kingdom is baptism (see the end of St. Matthew). All baptized persons are members of CHRIST's kingdom. As a rule, we talk of the kingdom as the Church—a word which means 'the LORD's house.' It is applied to the *building* where members of CHRIST's kingdom assemble, as well as to the members themselves.*

15. The time is fulfilled. There are two words translated 'time.' One means time in general ; the other means a *particular* time, and this is the word here. The particular time had come for the founding of the kingdom of GOD, so long predicted.

Believe the Gospel—*i.e.*, believe in, put your faith in, the Gospel.

16. The Sea of Galilee. This is also known as the Sea of Tiberias, Lake of Gennesaret, and, in the Old Testament, Sea of Chinnereth. It is about thirteen miles by six miles. The surface is about six hundred feet below the level of the ocean. Nine cities stood on the very edge of the lake, and the whole neighbourhood was thickly peopled. 'The water of the lake is sweet, cool, and transparent. It abounds in fish now as in ancient times' (Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible').

Simon. Peter, or Cephas.

They were fishers. Every Jew was taught a trade. It is a very great mistake to suppose that the Jews had the same social distinctions as we have. A fisherman in those days might be a well-educated man of good birth. (Compare note, page 44).

17. Fishers of men. The kingdom of GOD was like a net cast into the sea, and the Apostles were the first to let down the net (see the Parable of the Net in Matt. 13. 47, 48).

18. And followed Him. The call came, and they obeyed without hesitation. They were to be specially trained for their high office. For three years they had the advantage of the companionship and discourses of the greatest Teacher of mankind. There seems to be no hint whatever that our LORD thought the preachers of the Gospel could dispense with a careful training.

* *Church.* The Bible word translated 'church' is 'ecclesia,' which means 'the chosen;' hence our word 'ecclesiastical.' The word 'kuriakon,' 'kirk' or 'church,' means 'the Lord's house,' or 'those belonging to the Lord.'

20 And straightway he called them : and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

21 And they went into Capernaum ; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

22 And they were astonished at his doctrine : for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit ; and he cried out,

20. The hired servants. James and John evidently had the advantage of being members of a well-to-do family. The common notion that our LORD's Apostles were a set of ignorant, uncultured peasants is altogether astray. It is very unfortunate that in Acts 4. 13 the words 'unlearned and ignorant men' should have been retained in the Revised Version. The words in the original simply mean that the Apostles were private persons, and had not been trained in the schools of the great Jewish doctors. A Newton or a Shakespeare would have been called 'unlearned and ignorant' in the sense conveyed by the original expression in Acts 4. 13. If we consider the writings of the Apostles, we see what an absurd translation we have in the words 'unlearned and ignorant' when applied to men who could produce such books.

21. Capernaum. On the west of the Sea of Galilee. Our LORD was brought up at Nazareth, but Capernaum was His home (if He may be said to have had one) during His ministry.

22. Doctrine—*i.e.*, 'teaching.' 'Dogma,' a kindred word to 'doctrine,' means a set form of teaching.

Scribes. These were men learned in the Scriptures. Their duty was to copy, read, study, and explain the Sacred Writings, and guard them by 'fencing' them with the teachings handed down (traditions) from the elders. These traditions gradually became so important that they even took a higher place than the Mosaic law itself. The Scribes are sometimes called 'Rabbis,' 'doctors,' and 'lawyers' (because learned in the law of Moses). Their teaching was *second-hand*. They simply repeated what had been handed down to them. Our LORD taught on His own authority : 'I say unto you.'

23. Synagogue. This word means a 'gathering,' or 'congregation.' Just as the word 'church' meant Christians, and afterwards was applied to the place where Christians met, so the word 'synagogue' was used to signify the congregation, and also the building where the Jewish congregation met. When the Jews were in exile in Babylon (606 B.C. to 536 B.C.) they were completely cut off from worship in the Temple, and it was then that synagogues became a necessity. Services were held twice or thrice daily, and it was the duty of every godly Jew to go to each service.

The worship consisted of prayer, psalms, and reading of Scripture. Short explanations were always given of the passages which were read, and, in addition, a Rabbi or other person

24 Saying, Let *us* alone ; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this ? what new doctrine *is* this ? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

31 And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up ; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

might be asked to address the people. It is interesting to note that in these synagogues, where our LORD was accustomed to worship, they used fixed forms of prayer, and a properly ordered ritual (see Geikie's 'Life and Words of Christ,' vol. i., chap. xiii.).

With an unclean spirit. Literally, 'in an unclean spirit'—*i.e.*, under his influence. There are beings of lower kind than man. It is not, therefore, a matter for surprise to find there are beings higher than man. These are called 'spirits,' and we read of good spirits, such as the angels, and evil spirits, such as the devil and all his followers. Man can and does influence man to an enormous extent. How much more easily may a spirit influence or 'possess' man !

24. What have we to do with Thee ? The devils believe 'and tremble' (see Jas. 2. 19).

25. Hold thy peace. Literally, 'Be muzzled.'

29-34. Notice the details in these verses. The incidents would naturally have been strongly impressed on the mind of Simon—*i.e.*, Peter, or Cephas—and he gave them to St. Mark in a very life-like way.

30. Anon—*i.e.*, immediately.

31. She ministered unto them. After her illness, even when cured, she would naturally have been very weak. St. Mark, therefore, mentions this fact of her ministering, or serving them, as showing how complete was the recovery. It placed the cure on an altogether different level from any wrought by an ordinary physician.

32. When the sun did set. The day was a Sabbath (see verse 21), and the Jewish Sabbath ended in the evening. Also, it was the coolest part of the day, and best suited for the invalids. Doubt-

33 And all the city was gathered together at the door.

34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All *men* seek for thee.

38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth *his* hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean,

less, there were some whose faith was weak, and it was not until the dread of another weary night impelled them that they came to the Good Physician. How true now! When the sun of life has set, many who have never come to the Saviour before at last draw near and seek His touch before they enter the shadow of death.

34. Divers—*i.e.*, different kinds of.

Suffered not the devils to speak. 'Devils' should be translated 'demons.' Our LORD here shows that He does not think that 'the end justifies the means.' He would not seek any gain at the mouth of evil spirits. They knew Him 'to be the CHRIST,' as some MSS. have it; but He would not permit them to bear witness of the fact. He determined to win man by His own power alone.

35. And there prayed. The Lake of Gennesaret has many rocky recesses where one could obtain privacy. 'And there prayed' is, literally, 'and there *was praying*.' Our LORD, after the mighty works of the previous day, sought fresh stores of spiritual energy in prayer. He was truly human, and required that aid which all of us need.

36. Followed after Him. The words mean something much stronger in the original. 'Hunted Him out' is a better translation.

38. Towns. Country towns possessing a synagogue.

40. Leper. The disease of leprosy was a living death. The limbs of the body rotted away. The face was disfigured with horrible sore places. Above all other maladies it typified sin, which eats away the spiritual life.

41. Moved with compassion. Literally, '*His bowels yearned upon him.*' We talk about our heart as the seat of the feelings; the ancients spoke of the bowels in the same connexion. Such a loathsome object as a leper would fill most of us with disgust, but our LORD was the Word of GOD, and 'all things were made by Him' (see John 1. 3). This wretched specimen of humanity

42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away ;

44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man : but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45 But he went out, and began to publish *it* much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places : and they came to him from every quarter.

was a piece of our LORD's handiwork *gone wrong*. It might have been the man's own fault or the fault of others ; it certainly was not his Maker's wish that he was so disfigured by disease, any more than it is GOD's will that man should be so awfully disfigured by sin. Whenever our LORD sees disease or sin (the one being typical of the other, and in general the consequence of the other) He is moved to put the case right. Like a skilful workman, but with infinitely deeper feeling, He is constrained to at once amend His workmanship so sadly marred and ruined. It meant ceremonial defilement to touch the leper, but our LORD put forth His hand and placed it upon the poor, foul body, and he was cleansed.

43. Straitly charged him—*i.e.*, sternly charged him. Our LORD did not want to be looked upon as a mere miracle-monger. His miracles were part of the Gospel message, and were not intended to cause troops of gaping crowds to follow Him. Another reason for this charge to the man not to tell anyone was, probably, that it would be bad for the man himself. As a rule, any signal blessing from GOD to the individual should be a matter of quiet, private meditation. If the news of that blessing is flaunted in everybody's face, it may end in an outburst of pride on the part of the receiver of the blessing (compare the note on Chapter 5, verse 19).

44. Shew thyself to the priest. This was according to the law of Moses. In the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus an account is given of the offering required.

For a testimony unto them. The person healed was to follow out the rites laid down by the law as a proof to those in authority that he was really clean. In this way he would obtain the proper papers to give him permission to return to the ordinary course of life. Also, our LORD's command to the man to respect the Mosaic law was a witness to the fact that He was no anarchist seeking to destroy the fabric of society. He knew that if His principles were accepted, men would gradually shake off the once useful rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law. But there was to be no sudden snapping with the past ; our LORD came to fulfil (fill full) or develop what already existed, and not to overturn it. The physical world had evolved under His guidance ; the world of the souls of men would evolve through the precepts laid down by Him.

CHAPTER 2

AND again he entered into Capernaum after *some* days ; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door : and he preached the word unto them.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was : and when they had broken *it* up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

1. In the house, or ' at home.'

3. Sick of the palsy. He suffered from paralysis, a disease which frequently causes complete inability to use the limbs.

4. For the press—*i.e.*, the crowd.

They uncovered the roof, etc. Staircases to Eastern houses are *outside*. The roof is made of rafters covered with short sticks and brushwood ; on this is a coating of mortar and earth rolled flat. On some roofs there is an opening which is closed during the cold and wet season. They may have either uncovered this opening or made an entirely new one.

5. **When Jesus saw their faith.** Notice that our LORD grants the blessing to the paralytic when He sees the faith of *those who bring him*. So, too, when He sees the faith, and hears the answer of the godparents who bring the infant to be baptized, He grants the desired blessing.

Son. The word for 'son' is the same as in the expression 'the children of God' in John 1. 12. The reply to the faith of those who bring the sick man is, first of all, to receive him as a child of God. And the blessing granted in Christian baptism is regeneration, or receiving the child into the family of God, so that there is a further parallel between this case and infant baptism.

Thy sins be forgiven thee—*i.e.*, thy sins are forgiven. Paralysis is a disease of the nervous system. The mind affects us very much in illness ; especially is this so in cases of nervous disorders. Our LORD, therefore, released the man from the benumbing influence of sin before He gave energy and health to his shattered nerves.

6. **Certain of the scribes.** Our LORD had roused the enmity of the authorised teachers and leaders of the Jews. They looked upon Him as an interloper—a man acting without any proper commission. The crowds that followed Jesus filled them with envy and jealousy. So they determined to dog His footsteps and see if He gave them an opportunity to bring some charge against Him.

7 Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies ? who can forgive sins but God only ?

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts ?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee : or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk ?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

7. Blasphemies—*i.e.*, evil-speaking, especially speaking against God.

Who can forgive sins but God only ? Certainly no one can forgive sins except GOD. It would be frightful blasphemy for the most godly *man* to pretend to forgive sins. If, then, JESUS were only a good man, or even the best man that ever lived, here was an excellent opportunity for Him to explain. But notice, instead of pointing out that they misunderstood His words, our LORD drives them home with full force by healing the man, and making his miraculous cure a sign of His still greater power to forgive sins.

8. Perceived in His spirit. There is no need to suppose that our LORD used His almighty power to perceive their secret reasoning. A pure, innocent spirit (such as we often see in children) gives the possessor a wonderful intuitive perception of other people's motives and character.

9. Whether is it easier to say, etc. What our LORD implies is, 'What I *say* is true; you may not believe Me when I say I forgive sin; perhaps you will believe Me if I say something else just as easy to say, and allow you to observe My saying fulfilled by curing the disease. When you have seen the one saying come true, you may be led to believe that the other saying is true.'

Take up thy bed. A kind of stretcher used for carrying sick folk, or a portable mat.

10. Son of man. This title is used by our LORD of Himself. He is not addressed in this way by others. The expression 'Son of' meant 'essentially.' For instance, 'son of Belial' meant 'son of worthlessness,' or an essentially worthless person. Our LORD was essentially man. Human nature is so complex, so many-sided, that to give a picture of a perfect man we should have to borrow characteristics from the whole human race: one person would contribute this detail of perfection, another would give a further detail, etc. Our LORD sums up the totality of perfection in Himself alone. And in Him we find not only perfection of manhood, but also perfect woman. A careful study of His life shows that He had all those characteristics which we consider woman to have in a more marked way than man.

Intuition (or the power of grasping truth without argument or testimony), attention to detail, self-sacrifice, love which never shrinks, no matter how wretched or even loathsome is the object, tender care for little ones—all these, and many other

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

17 When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

qualities which, indeed, men possess, but which are particularly associated in our idea of woman, were shown in a noteworthy way by our LORD. He summed up the perfection of manhood and womanhood in His own person—He was the Son of man.

Hath power on earth to forgive sins. GOD had power in heaven to forgive sins; who had power on earth? GOD incarnate—*i.e.*, GOD in the flesh.

12. Took up the bed. The cure was not only immediate—it was complete, for he was able to use his limbs and carry his bed—a portable mat or stretcher.

14. Levi. Generally known as St. Matthew, the author of the Gospel. He was a publican or tax-collector. The Roman Government let out different districts to the highest bidder. This person (usually a rich knight), strictly speaking, was the publican. He underlet his district to many inferior officials, who were called, in the New Testament, publicans as well. These men examined bales of goods exported or imported, and assessed their value as they thought fit, and charged a tax accordingly. Naturally they overcharged as much as possible, and sometimes brought false accusations of smuggling in order to extort bribes. To a Jewish mind it was wrong altogether to pay tribute. Add to this the fact that a publican had to mix with the heathen, and was continually ceremonially defiled, and it was no wonder that these officers were classed with sinners.

15. Sat—*i.e.*, reclined. They did not sit on chairs as we do, but lay down on couches leaning on the left side, with the feet outwards.

Sinners. Literally, 'those who miss the mark.' When we sin, we miss the mark or aim of our being. The Jews applied the word to foreigners (Gentiles) and to any impious person.

17. Righteous. The word means, strictly, 'just,' 'one who does what is right.' It was particularly applied to those who obeyed scrupulously all the demands of the Jewish law.

18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast : and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not ?

19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them ? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment : else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles : else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred : but new wine must be put into new bottles.

18. Disciple. A scholar, or follower of a teacher. After CHRIST's death the word was used as being equal to 'Christian.' (Notice, the Apostles were disciples, but every disciple was not an Apostle. The Apostle—'one sent forth'—had special qualifications : he was one who had seen our LORD and received his commission from Him.)

John—the Baptist.

Used to fast. The fast on the day of Atonement was the only one appointed by the law. Other fasts were added during the Jewish captivity in Babylon. In the time of our LORD two days every week, Monday and Thursday, were also observed as fasts by many of the strictest Jews.

19. Children of the bridechamber. 'Sons of the bridechamber.' They were the companions of the bridegroom, who were guests during the bridal feast.

While the bridegroom is with them. John himself had spoken of our LORD as the Bridegroom, and referred to the rejoicing at His presence (John 3. 29).

20. But the days will come. There is no 'the' : 'but days will come.' It is impossible to avoid seeing that our LORD not only foresaw fasting as a recognised principle in His Church, but that He also wished it. See in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (7. 5) the injunction 'that ye may give yourselves to fasting.'

21. The translation should run : 'No man seweth a patch of unfulled cloth upon an old garment ; else the piece for filling up taketh from it, the fresh from the old, and a worse rent is made.' The word in the original for 'rent' is one which we have brought into our language—'schism.' Cloth was fulled, or dressed by a fuller. The fuller raised the nap by means of the teazle, or comb, and dressed the cloth with fullers' earth to make it white. Unfulled cloth meant new cloth.

22. Translate : 'No man putteth new wine into old wine-skins, else the wine will burst the wine-skins, and the wine is lost and the wine-skins ; but new wine [must be put] into fresh wine-skins.' The bottle of ancient times was frequently the skin of a goat sewn up ; indeed, similar 'bottles' are used to

23 And it came to pass that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?

this day in the East. The meaning of verses 21 and 22 seems to be: The work of John (looking at it from one point of view) was like putting a new patch on an old garment, or like putting new wine into old wine-skins. It was only for a short time that his dispensation would last. It was no good trying to patch up Judaism; this would cause schism. Christianity was not intended as a new sect of the Jews. A new age was beginning. God's revelation to the Jews was fully developed and extended by JESUS CHRIST. It required a fresh generation to accept it. The freedom of the Gospel was for those able to receive it.

23. Sabbath—*i.e.*, day of rest. It was intended as a day of rest or recreation after the six days of labour. Rest does not imply idleness, or leaving off every occupation. The Sabbath was also a day of special worship. The spirit in which the day was to be kept is found expressed in Ps. 118.: 'This is the day which Jehovah hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.'

24. Pharisees. Men of a certain religious school of thought amongst the Jews. The name Pharisee means 'one who is separated.' They were not, however, a sect. The Jews had no sects, but there were parties *within* the Jewish Church. The Pharisees were a very important party in the time of our LORD. They held that not only was the law of Moses binding on them, but also various injunctions handed down alongside of it. These precepts and prohibitions were the 'traditions'—*i.e.*, 'things handed down.' There were innumerable points of ritual and ceremony, to which they attached as much importance as to moral acts. The Pharisees were not merely ritualists (we are all ritualists more or less); they were *formalists*—a very different thing. Rites and ceremonies are great helps, and are means to an end, but they must not be treated as an end in themselves. It is not to be supposed, however, that *all* Pharisees were included in our LORD's denunciations. And, note, our LORD is very careful to say, when referring to their ceremonial scrupulousness as compared with judgment, mercy, and faith: 'These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone' (see Matt. 23. 23).

24. That which is not lawful. Plucking the ears of corn was allowable (Deut. 23. 25). It was not merely this which roused the Pharisees to make their charge. Their doctors had decided that to pluck corn was *reaping*, and to rub it between the hands *threshing*; our LORD's disciples were, therefore, looked upon as *working* on the Sabbath.

26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him ?

27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath :

28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

CHAPTER 3

AND he entered again into the synagogue ; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day ; that they might accuse him.

26. In the days of Abiathar. (See 1 Sam. 21.) The name of the priest who actually gave the bread was Ahimelech, the father of Abiathar.

Did eat the shewbread. ' Bread of the face '—*i.e.*, set before the presence of God. Every Sabbath twelve newly-baked loaves were put on the table of shewbread in the Temple. These were eaten at the end of the week by the priest in the Holy Place, out of which they might not be removed. The shewbread was a sign whereby Israel continually declared their connexion with the LORD. The loaves were, indeed, a symbol and type of the spiritual bread by which GOD's people retained that life which consists in seeing the face of GOD. David and his friends ate the shewbread, which was not lawful for them to eat, and even did this on the Sabbath-day. He was their favourite hero, and yet had broken the law with the sanction of the high-priest. No blame, however, was attached to him, because mercy and necessity come before ceremonial law. Our LORD and His disciples simply followed David, and acted under the same principles as he did.

27. The Sabbath was made for man. This is the charter of our Christian liberty as to the observance of the day of rest. The old Jewish Sabbath, hedged in with burdensome restrictions, is a thing of the past. Christians do not even keep the *seventh* day, but the *first* day, as their day of rest. The chief purpose of the day is told us in Acts 20. 7, where we read : ' On the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread '—that is, to come to the Holy Communion. *Spiritual refreshment* is the keynote of the day. As regards bodily and mental refreshment, each must settle for himself what is most desirable, provided, of course, he does not interfere with others in their enjoyment of the day.

1. Withered hand. The limb was ' dried up ' and useless. The disease was incurable by human skill.

2. They watched Him—*i.e.*, the scribes and Pharisees. The word translated ' watched ' means to ' eye closely,' and is generally used to indicate watching with evil intent.

3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judæa,

8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and *from* beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him, because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth *unto him* whom he would: and they came unto him.

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.

5. Hardness. 'Hardening of their hearts.' It means that the process of hardening was actually going on; they were even then deliberately setting themselves more and more against Him.

And he stretched it out. We must have faith before we can do anything or receive any blessing. The man did not wait to argue, he simply made the effort and experienced the result. It is interesting to observe that our every act is based on faith. We must have confidence in ourselves, in others, or in the orderly course of nature, before we can accomplish anything.

6. Herodians. Partisans of Herod. There were many Jews who foresaw that the Roman power was a grave danger to their very existence as a nation, and they looked to the Herod family as a protection against direct heathen rule. They did not wish to become merged into a mere Roman province. The Herodians, therefore, were a *political* party.

9. A small ship—*i.e.*, a little boat.

10. Plagues, 'scourges'—*i.e.*, diseases which afflict the body.

13. A mountain—the mountain. Evidently one well known to Peter; he forgets for the moment that others may not know it, and so does not say its name. It is supposed to have been the 'Horns of Hattin,' the only noticeable hill on the west of Lake Gennesaret.

Whom He would—*i.e.*, whom He willed.

14. He ordained twelve. These had been disciples; they were now appointed or ordained to a special office—Apostles.

15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils :

16 And Simon he surnamed Peter ;

17 And James the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James ; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder :

18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the *son* of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite,

Notice that an Apostle was one appointed by our LORD Himself. The men whom the Apostles appointed to succeed them held the office which is now generally called ' Bishop.'

16. Simon. Surnamed by our Lord Peter, or Cephas, which means the ' Rock-man.' On many occasions Peter was the spokesman of the rest of the Apostles, and, together with James and John, was chosen to be present when some unusually important events took place. It is interesting to notice the circumstance under which he was called Peter. He had just declared that JESUS was the CHRIST, the SON of GOD. Our LORD replied: ' Thou art Peter [Rock-man], and upon this Petra [rock] I will build My Church ' (see Matt. 16. 18). The explanation of this passage has been given in various ways. The greatest number of authorities interpret the rock to mean the faith which Peter confessed—viz., that JESUS was the CHRIST, the SON of GOD. Peter was also the Rock-man because he laid the foundation-stone, or rock-bed, of the Church when he preached on the Day of Pentecost, and three thousand souls were baptized.

It may be noticed that although Peter was bold, even to rashness, in several instances his faith gave way just at the critical moment ; compare what happened when he came on the water to our LORD, also his denial. Possibly, therefore, another reason why he was called the Rock-man was to hold up an ideal for him to realise. He was anything but rock-like in firmness at first ; but when he was martyred he showed that at last he had attained to that character which his LORD expected from him.

Peter is sometimes said to have been ' first among equals ' as regards the other Apostles ; these words very fitly express his position. There are two Epistles or letters of his in the New Testament.

17. James. His death is recorded in Acts 12. 2.

John. James and John were sons of Zebedee and Salome. They were called ' Sons of Thunder ' (Boanerges) because of their zealous nature. This is especially shown in their eager wish to call down fire on the Samaritan village which refused to receive their LORD. John is referred to as ' the disciple whom JESUS loved,' and it was to him our LORD committed the care of His mother during His dying moments on the cross. We have a Gospel, three Epistles, and the Book of the Revelation written by John. He lived to a very great age, and we do not know for certain the manner of his death.

18. Andrew. Peter's brother.

19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him : and they went into an house.

20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

21 And when his friends heard of *it*, they went out to lay hold on him, for they said, He is beside himself.

Philip. He and Andrew were both natives of Bethsaida, and were the earliest followers of our LORD.

Bartholomew. Also called Nathanael.

Matthew, or Levi, the publican.

Thomas. 'The melancholy and doubting Thomas,' as he has been well described. It was he who would not believe in our LORD's resurrection unless he could see Him and touch Him. He is also called Didymus, a Greek word meaning the same as Thomas, which signifies 'a twin.' The reason why we find more than one name for some who are mentioned in the Gospels is that they would be known by their Hebrew name and also by its Greek equivalent.

James, son of Alphæus. 'Son' is put in italics, or sloping type. Whenever this type is used it shows that the words have been inserted to make up the meaning of the passage: the words thus printed are not in the original. Probably this James is the same person who is called 'the Less,' or 'Little.' He occupied a most important position in after-years, as he acted as president at the first council of the Church (see Acts 15.). If any supremacy ever existed among the Apostles, it must be conceded to James rather than to Peter.

Thaddæus. Called also Lebbæus and Judas, or Jude. Some think he wrote the Epistle which bears his name.

Simon the Canaanite. This is wrong; it should be Simon the Canaanæan, which means Simon the Zealot. He belonged to the faction of Zealots, who were particularly noted for their fierce advocacy of the Mosaic ritual.

19. Judas Iscariot. The word 'Iscariot' probably means a native of Kerieth, a little village of Judah.

Who also betrayed Him: 'who also delivered Him up.' 'Traitor' is a modern form of a Latin word which means 'one who delivers up.' The name Judas has become proverbially equal to the word 'traitor.' For his motives in committing so foul a sin, see note on Chapter 14, verse 10.

21. He is beside Himself. The verb means 'to be out of one's self.' It is the same verb used in Chapter 2, verse 12, where it is translated 'amazed.' The corresponding noun 'ecstasy' has been brought into use in our own language. It is to be carefully noted that they did not call our LORD a lunatic or an imbecile; they said, 'He is in a state of ecstasy.' They thought His energy and devotion to His mission had disturbed His mind. Perhaps there has never been a truly great, masterful soul but what some cold, narrow folk have uttered the same charge as this made against our LORD.

22 ¶ And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

23 And he called them *unto him*, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan ?

24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man ; and then he will spoil his house.

28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme :

29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation :

30 Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

22. He hath Beelzebub. A most blasphemous charge. His friends had described our LORD as being in a mental ecstasy—this was the result of misunderstanding ; His enemies said He was possessed with the Prince of Evil Spirits—this blasphemy sprang from settled malignity. The word 'Beelzebub' is another form of 'Baal-zebub,' which means the 'Lord of Flies.' The fly is an unclean and annoying insect, and therefore the 'Lord of Flies' was the most unclean god. In our LORD's time the term 'Beelzebub' was equal to 'Prince of Evil Spirits.'

Devils—i.e., demons, or evil spirits.

27. Strong man's house. The strong man is Satan ; the stronger is CHRIST.

28. Verily. The actual word in the original is 'Amen.' Our LORD used this word when He wishes to call special attention to a saying.

29. Blaspheme against the Holy Ghost. What this is can be gathered from the occasion which drew this solemn warning from our LORD. His enemies had deliberately determined to shut their hearts to what was good. Of set purpose they hardened themselves against CHRIST, and twisted His words and actions so as to read an evil meaning into them. Blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST, therefore, is not so much an act of sin as a *settled purpose* of sin. It is wilful persistence in sin—a deliberate intention of stifling conscience and abiding in sin. If anyone is in trouble because he is afraid he is guilty of this sin, he may derive hope and comfort from the fact that those who sin this unpardonable sin are just the very people who would *not* trouble about it at all.

But is in danger of eternal damnation. This, with the preceding words, should run, 'hath not forgiveness in eternity, but is held fast by eternal sin.' Wilfully to shut one's eyes to the good brings its own punishment—viz., a continual bondage to moral and spiritual darkness. There can be nothing more awful than to be eternally cut off from all that is good, pure, and holy.

31 ¶ There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren ?

34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren !

35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

CHAPTER 4

AND he began again to teach by the sea side : and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship and sat in the sea ; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

3 Hearken ; Behold, there went out a sower to sow :

4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth ; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth :

31. His brethren and His mother. The word translated 'brethren' also means cousins or near relatives. It has been held that they were the children of Mary, the sister of our LORD's mother, and Cleophas, or Alphæus. The most natural view is that they were really His brethren, children of Joseph and Mary ; but against this must be considered the fact that in the early Church this was *not* the general interpretation of the passage, and general tradition asserts the *perpetual* virginity of our LORD's mother. Another view, which seems the most likely, is that they were Joseph's children by a former marriage. Their names were James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. If this last explanation of the word 'brethren' is correct, we can understand that, being older than JESUS, they would consider they had some natural authority over Him ; together with their step-mother they came to induce Him to return with them.

1. By the sea side. Our LORD's parables must have come home with peculiar force to His hearers, for He made use of their surroundings to teach His lessons. The trodden path, the rocky ground, the thorn-bushes, and the deep, rich soil lay all around them. The mustard-tree grew on the shores of the lake. The fishermen were busy with their nets. The tares, or darnel, could be seen shooting up their tall, green stalks in the midst of the wheat.

2. Parables. This word means 'a placing things side by side, a comparison.' In the Gospels, as a rule, parables are stories comparing the things of earth with spiritual or heavenly things.

5. Stony ground—'rocky places.'

6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched ; and because it had no root, it withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased ; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God : but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables :

12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive ; and hearing they may hear, and not understand ; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them.

13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable ? and how then will ye know all parables ?

14 ¶ The sower soweth the word.

15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown ; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

11. Mystery. This word has altered its meaning ; it is now generally used to signify something we cannot understand. The original meaning is 'something into which one must be initiated.' The rites, etc., of a heathen religion were its mysteries, and were known to those who had been initiated into or instructed in them when they became members of that religion. In the New Testament the word 'mystery' means—(1) The Gospel itself ; (2) parts of the Gospel ; (3) a symbol or emblem.

Them that are without—non-Christians.

12. Should be converted. A wrong translation ; it should be : 'Lest haply they should turn again.' Compare Isa. 6. 9, 10, with this verse ; also Matt. 13. 15, where we read : 'For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed.' And observe that our LORD in Matt. 23. 37, breaks out into the pathetic words, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.' Putting these passages together, verse 12 evidently means, 'Those that are without have closed their understanding to My words ; henceforth I do not speak to them as I did, for instance, in the Sermon on the Mount ; I now use parables. Anyone who wants to understand them, whose ears are not dulled to spiritual things, I will gather to Me. But those who will to stay without will be the more repelled by this form of teaching. Any faculty not used is lost for want of exercise ; their spiritual faculty will perish because they have neglected it. They may hear My stories, but the deep lessons underlying them will be beyond their grasp.'

13. All parables. 'All *the* parables' which our LORD spake to them.

16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground ; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness ;

17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time : afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

18 And these are they which are sown among thorns ; such as hear the word,

19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

20 And these are they which are sown on good ground ; such as hear the word, and receive *it*, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

21 ¶ And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed ? and not to be set on a candlestick ?

22 For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested ; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear : with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you : and unto you that hear shall more be given.

19. Lusts. Desires, or earnest longings.

NOTE.—Our LORD, in His explanation of the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, gives us an example how to interpret the other parables. We learn that only certain points in a parable may be compared. For instance, the ground could not help being trodden upon, or being rocky, etc. But human beings, with will-power, *can* help to prepare their hearts to be open to the influence of good teaching, and *can* help to guard their souls from evil influences which would prevent that teaching producing the fruitful crop of a good life. So, in this respect, there is no comparison. The point of comparison is the actual *result* of the sowing, as seen on the ground before His hearers, and the actual *result* of the preaching the Gospel. And that result is seen now, as then : the parable is of continuous application, and therefore has a warning and lesson for all of us, and for all time.

21. The translation should run : ' Is the lamp brought to be put under the peck-measure, or under the bed ? Is it not in order that it may be put on the lamp-stand ?'

22. Translate : ' For there is nothing hid save that it should be manifested ; neither was anything made secret, but that it should come to light.'

The mysteries of the Gospel were being expounded by our LORD in order that His disciples should spread them abroad.

24. For the mysteries of the Gospel to be apprehended, it was necessary that the hearers should give their best attention. Failure to understand may be the fault, partly, of the preacher. It was not so in this case ; it depended entirely on the hearer. The greater the measure of their diligence in listening, the greater the measure of that which they would receive.

25 For he that hath, to him shall be given : and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

26 ¶ And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground ;

27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself ; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

30 ¶ And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God ? or with what comparison shall we compare it ?

31 *It is* like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth :

32 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches ; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear *it*.

25. Even that which he hath. In the corresponding passage, Luke 8. 18, we read : ' Even that which he *thinketh* he hath.' The more we cultivate our faculties of apprehension, the more we can receive. If we allow our minds to be dwarfed and narrowed, we shall gradually lose even the knowledge which we think we have.

29. But when the fruit is brought forth—i.e., when the fruit presents itself.

26-29. The parable is of the kingdom of GOD—i.e., CHRIST'S Church. The seed of the Gospel is sown in the world, and the Church grows and spreads. It might seem as if it did so under no particular order, in a haphazard manner ; but this is a mistake. Just as the corn develops under certain principles—the laws of Nature—so CHRIST'S Church develops under the hidden influence of the HOLY SPIRIT, in an orderly, progressive manner. Our LORD, in this parable, gave a prophetic view of His Church. We can see how far the prophecy already has been fulfilled when we consider the infant Church at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and then compare it with the Church now.

30. The last part of this verse should be : ' Or under what parable shall we present it ?'

31. Is less than all the seeds, etc.—i.e., least of all the seeds which the farmer sows.

32. The mustard-plant has been seen in the East, growing *wild*, as tall as a man on horseback. It might well attain even larger size when under cultivation.

30-32. When our LORD hung on the cross, and His disciples had forsaken Him, humanly speaking, one would have said it was impossible for His kingdom to grow and attain any size. The seed was, indeed, microscopic. Yet there are now 500,000,000 Christians.

34 But without a parable spake he not unto them : and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow : and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish ?

39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful ? how is it that ye have no faith ?

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him ?

33. As they were able to hear. (There is no 'it.') These words explain the principle under which God reveals Himself and His will to man. Not only to the Apostles, but to the whole human race, God has been gradually revealing Himself 'as they are able to hear.' So we find in the Old Testament more elementary ideas of God, and, on the other hand, a much fuller revelation in the New Testament. And our Lord's teaching to the Apostles gradually led them on step by step until, after His resurrection, we find Him speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. What those things were we know from what we read in the Acts and in the Epistles.

36. Ship—boat.

37. Translate : 'And there arose a great hurricane of wind, and the waves were beating into the boat, so that already the boat was being filled.'

38. Master—'Teacher.'

40. How is it that ye have no faith ? 'Have ye not yet faith ?'

37-41. The Lake of Gennesaret is six hundred feet below the level of the sea. The wind sometimes rushed down the mountain gorges, and caused a frightful storm to arise in a moment. At our Lord's word the force of the wind is bound, and the disastrous effects at once blotted out—'there was a great calm.' The disciples had witnessed their Master's power over disease, but they had not yet seen how the gigantic forces of Nature bowed to His decree, neither was their faith yet deep enough to anticipate that He had such power. There are many now who would teach us that we are under the grim rule of the 'laws of Nature,' and that those laws must always act with fateful and machine-like regularity. This miracle teaches otherwise. Will-power is even greater than physical forces.

The expression 'laws of Nature' simply means that God works in an orderly manner. He is not like an unskilled workman who requires to be continually improving upon his methods. Men have witnessed this orderly, regular way in which He works,

CHAPTER 5

AND they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3 Who had *his* dwelling among the tombs ; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains :

4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces : neither could any *man* tame him.

5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

and have methodically arranged these observed facts in certain groups. It has been noticed that one certain fact always comes before another, and so it has been laid down that they are connected with each other. In this way men have drawn up what they call 'laws of Nature.' And, believing that GOD is a GOD of order and method, we may expect to find that He works in a regular manner. But when men presume to say that events could *never* come in a different order, that there *never* could be a variety in the method used, they are saying much more than they could possibly know. GOD usually works in the way we observe, but it is sheer absurdity to say He can never vary His method. It is trying to faith when one sees GOD's orderly method producing suffering. It would be *much more trying* to believe that there is a province entirely out of GOD's care ; and this is what we should be compelled to believe if the forces of Nature worked altogether apart from GOD's will.

This subject will be referred to later on (see note on Chapter 6, verse 5).

1. **Gadarenes.** Some of the MSS. have 'Gerasenes,' and others 'Gergesenes.' Gadara and Gerasa are the names of large cities at some distance from the lake ; the district in which Gergesa was situated was called after one or other of these towns, just as, for instance, 'London' is a term applied to a very wide district reaching many miles beyond the actual boundaries of the city of London. The ruins of a place called Kherza (a late form of Gergesa) have been discovered opposite Capernaum.

2. **A man.** Matt. 8. 28 mentions *two* demoniacs. Probably one of them was better known, or made himself on this occasion more prominent than the other.

3. **In the tombs.** Natural caves or recesses hewn out of the rocks. Such tombs are still found in the district.

4. **The chains.** The translation should be : 'The chains had been rent asunder by him, and the fetters, or shackles, rubbed to pieces.'

Neither could any man tame him. Literally, 'No man had strength to tame him.'

6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, *thou* unclean spirit.

9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told *it* in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

6. Worshipped Him. The word translated 'worshipped' means—(1) An act of homage paid to anyone; (2) especially an act of reverence paid by an inferior to a superior; (3) also, the act of adoring GOD. Our word 'worship' has all these meanings; compare the use of it in the Marriage Service: 'With my body I thee worship'—*i.e.*, 'I thee reverence.' The meaning in this verse is probably (2), but may be (3).

7. What have I to do with Thee? 'What have we in common?' **Torment me not.** The original word for 'torment' means 'to apply the touchstone,' and so 'to examine by applying torture.' Our LORD's calm, penetrating, reproachful scrutiny was torture to the evil spirit. Also His command to 'come out of the man' was anguish to this unclean demon who found delight in possessing unhappy humanity.

9. What is thy name? Probably the question was put in order to calm the excited man. His name would help to recall him to himself.

Legion. The largest body of troops in the Roman army was so called. At this time it would be over 6,000 men. The man possessed had seen or heard of the dense mass of a Roman legion, fearful in their prowess, and so he gave this name to the demons who mastered him.

10. Send them away. From Luke 8. 31, we see that the demons besought our LORD not to send them into the abyss—the prison-house of evil spirits. They wished to remain in that locality, where they might continue their foul influence over men.

13. Entered into the swine. This district was inhabited by Jews and Gentiles. The swine might have belonged to the latter, but if they were the property of the Jews, it was altogether unlawful for them to traffic in swine, or to eat their flesh.

A steep place. Near Kherza is the only spot where a steep slope overlooks a very narrow strip of beach. A herd rushing down the slope would be bound to plunge into the lake.

15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind : and they were afraid.

16 And they that saw *it* told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and *also* concerning the swine.

17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

15. Clothed. St. Mark has not told us he was unclothed before his cure ; we get this information in St. Luke. This is only one of the many instances where the Evangelists (writers of the Gospels) unconsciously corroborate one another.

17. To depart out of their coasts. If the owners of the swine had been Gentiles, we might have expected that they would have shown their anger at the loss of their property by attempting violence against our LORD. If they were Jews, the comparatively meek way in which they put up with the destruction of the swine is accounted for by supposing that they felt that it was a just punishment for their unlawful traffic. Many have considered it a difficulty that our LORD should have permitted the demons to enter the swine, and bring about such a loss. The difficulty is met by supposing the owners were Jews. At any rate, it may be questioned whether those who find the loss of the swine a difficulty may not do so because they rather love a difficulty. For, be it observed, those who suffered the loss seem to have been more calm over it than those good folk who pity them so much ! Moreover, neither our LORD nor His disciples found anything difficult about the matter. We may therefore venture to take it in the same way, and wait for fuller light, if needed.

Our LORD departed 'out of their coasts' (borders) at their request. He forces himself on no one. This was a case where the worst thing which could happen was to have a prayer granted. The Light of the World had come, and they chose darkness—their punishment was to have their choice ratified.

About forty years afterwards, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, all this district was ravaged by the Romans—fire, sword, or slavery was the doom of the wretched inhabitants. If they had received our LORD they would have heard His prophetic warnings, and might have avoided these horrors. This, at all events, was the case with the disciples, who fled to Pella, and so escaped.

18. And when He was come into the ship. Translate : 'And when He was embarking on board the boat.' As our LORD was stepping into the boat, the man who had been possessed with the demons was beseeching that he might be with Him. Either a grateful heart, or the fear lest he should be overcome again may have prompted him to make this request. But our LORD never encourages the notion that His visible presence is necessary. Those who are united to Him in spirit will receive aid in time of need.

19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him : and all *men* did marvel.

21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him : and he was nigh unto the sea.

22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name ; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death : *I pray thee*, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed ; and she shall live.

24 And *Jesus* went with him ; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up ; and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of that plague.

30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes ?

19. Our LORD had work for the man to do. Then, as now, those who have been blessed by Him are bidden to publish the good news.

Notice that in this case the recipient of our LORD's mercy is told to publish it ; in other cases they are strictly required to keep silence. By considering the different circumstances of the cases we can see that our LORD gave the injunction of silence to prevent His being crowded by troops of idle gossips. In this case, where He enjoins publicity, He was about to depart altogether, so there was no need to restrain the grateful tongue of the man who had been restored (compare the note on Chapter 1, verse 43).

20. **Decapolis.** This word means 'ten cities.' An ancient writer, Pliny, gives a list of them. In our LORD's time the word signified a large district extending along both sides of the Jordan.

22. **The rulers of the synagogue.** A body of elders, presided over by one who was called *the* ruler of the synagogue. Their duty was to preserve order, and make choice of persons to read or speak in the assembly.

27. **His garment.** The mantle which our LORD wore was like a square shawl. Tassels, as fringes, were fixed to the corners, and amongst the white threads was one of blue—the emblem of heaven. It reminded every Jew that he belonged to GOD. One of these tassels hung over the back, and this the woman touched.

30. Translate : 'And JESUS, immediately perceiving in Himself the power having gone forth from Him.'

Who touched my clothes ? Our LORD was pressed by many, but only one touched Him with the hand of faith.

31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me ?

32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole ; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's *house certain* which said, Thy daughter is dead : why troublest thou the Master any further ?

36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

37 And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

33. Fearing and trembling. Her touch had conveyed ceremonial defilement to our LORD (see Lev. 15. 19-27), and she may have dreaded His anger.

Told Him all the truth. In Luke 8. 47, we read : 'She declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately.' It was a public confession which, according to our notions, she might well have been spared. May not our notions be wrong ? There may be many secret things which, if confessed in public, would help not only the person who confesses, but also the hearers.

34. Thy faith hath made thee whole. 'Thy faith hath saved thee.' The woman may have thought her cure was something like the result of magic, and that there was virtue in the garment which she had touched. Our LORD wants her to know that the power had gone forth from *Him* ; it was His will and purpose which cured, and it was her faith which enabled her to be the recipient of the blessing. At the same time, it is important to notice that the woman *was cured* by means of touching the tassel—our LORD, in condescension to human conditions, does not despise outward and visible means of conveying blessing. In the Sacraments He even ordains or appoints their use.

Go in peace. Literally, 'Go into peace.' Henceforth the woman would live in an atmosphere of peace ; she need not be afraid of her disease returning ; she was freed from her scourge.

35. Why troublest thou the Master any further ? Literally, 'Why dost thou still trouble the Teacher ?'

36. Only believe. The word in the original has several shades of meaning ; for instance, it may mean, to believe that a person is telling the truth, or to *have trust* in a person. It is the latter meaning which is here intended.

37. Peter, James, and John. This is one of those occasions when our LORD especially chose these three Apostles to be with Him.

38. Wept and wailed. Everything was done to mark the loss sustained. Mourning in those days was intensified by hiring

39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep ? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, *Talitha cumi* ; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked ; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it ; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

women to lament the departed. The poorest Jew would have at least two flute-players and one mourning woman.

39. Why make ye this ado ? Our LORD forbids any ostentation of grief ; not that He was unsympathetic, for in the case of Lazarus ' JESUS wept,' but He would not that the solemnity of death should be disturbed by any unreality. The early Christian passing away ' in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection,' did not indulge in the lavish display of mourning which the Jews employed. The inscriptions in the catacombs at Rome (underground burial-places) show that death was looked upon as the gate of fuller life, and therefore was a matter of joy. Sorrow must have its natural outlet, but the mourning of a Christian, who, from his Creed, anticipates that death is to ' be with CHRIST ' in a closer union, ought to be very different from the extravagances of those who must always have a lurking dread that death is ' a leap into the dark.'

Sleepeth. She was really dead, but our LORD uses the term to remind them that death leads to the great awaking.

40. Laughed Him to scorn. This is sufficient evidence that the girl was dead ; they laughed at the bare idea that she was only asleep. These scornful ones are then cast out. Only those who have some sympathy, or who, at all events, are not jeering at Him, are taken to see the work He is about to accomplish. There must be a certain fitness of mind to witness a miracle—indeed, this is true of witnessing anything with profit.

41. Talitha cumi. These words are Aramaic, or the form of Hebrew then spoken. The miracle had so deeply impressed Peter that he remembers the actual words, and quotes them.

42. They were astonished. The verb is the same in Chapter 3, verse 21, where it is used in respect of our LORD, and is there translated ' beside Himself.'

43. Something should be given her to eat. The astonishment—' ecstasy'—was so great that they neglected to attend upon the damsel. JESUS, who had just performed so great a work, now turns His mind to the simplest and most commonplace need.

CHAPTER 6

AND he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing *him* were astonished, saying, From whence hath this *man* these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed *them*.

1. His own country—Nazareth.

Is not this the carpenter? Every Jew was taught a trade. One of the proverbs of the Rabbis was: 'He who taught not his son a trade, taught him to be a thief.' Our LORD, by working as a carpenter, consecrated all labour. There are, roughly, two classes of work—viz., brain-work and hand-work (manual labour). It is a very great mistake to suppose hand-workers are the only workmen; we ought to be very careful to include brain-workers in our conception of workmen. It is interesting to observe that a carpenter, having to *design* and *plan*, is a brain-worker as well as a hand-worker. Our LORD, therefore, consecrated *both* kinds of labour (compare note, page 18).

5. No mighty work—i.e., power. This word is sometimes translated 'miracle.'

'Miracle' means 'a wonder.' There are four words used when speaking of our LORD's miracles:

(1) *Powers*—because a miracle was the introduction of a direct power from God, or a power beyond our ordinary experience.

(2) *Wonders*—because of the wonder excited.

(3) *Signs*—because they signified that the performer came from God.

(4) *Works*—because they were the works which naturally were done by our LORD.

The expression 'laws of Nature' is only another name for the regular, methodical way in which we observe that God works. A miracle, therefore, cannot be said to be *against* the laws of Nature. It has been remarked that the miracles of earth are the laws of heaven, and it may well be so. If God sends a special messenger to men, it is only what we might expect to find that His messenger works in a special way. He naturally testifies to his heavenly mission by working in a heavenly manner. The fact of miracles having been done is a question of evidence, like every other fact. That there have been im-

6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

7 ¶ And he called *unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two ; and gave them power over unclean spirits ;

8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only ; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse.

9 But *be* shod with sandals ; and not put on two coats.

10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed *them*.

postures is true, but false miracles are no more an argument against true miracles than false coins are against genuine. Indeed, the one supposes the other.

Notice, our LORD was unable to perform miracles because of their 'unbelief.' He was not a magician ; His works were not the result of a greater knowledge of science, or a skilful adaptation of mechanical art. Want of faith was a hindrance to their operation : spiritual acts require spiritual atmosphere.

5. And healed them. Does GOD take notice of such a little thing as our ailments ? There are hundreds of millions of people, and, for what we know, there may be other worlds inhabited like ours with vast multitudes. And so we are tempted sometimes to think GOD only cares for us in a very general way. But it was part of the Gospel message that GOD cares for man in *every detail* of life, and He does not directly will that anyone should suffer a moment's pain ; our LORD's miracles of healing are a revelation of this truth.

7. Power over unclean spirits. The word translated ' power ' means ' authority '—that is, power received from another.

8. Scrip. So called because it was meant to hold scraps. Scrips, or wallets, were usually the skins of kids tanned.

No money. ' No brass in their girdle.' Hospitality was and is a sacred duty in the East. It was possible to travel from village to village and spend nothing.

10. When a stranger arrived in a place the inhabitants, one after another, must ask him in to partake of their hospitality. The Apostles, however, were not to waste time, nor to give themselves to festivity. They were to enter into a suitable house and abide there until their mission in that place was ended.

11. Shake off the dust. A sign that all intercourse between them was at an end. Note, the latter part of this verse is not found in the best MSS.

13. Anointed with oil many that were sick. Most probably they were instructed to do so by our LORD. This sacramental rite is referred to in the Epistle of James, 5. 14. There is no warrant

14 And king Herod heard of *him* ; (for his name was spread abroad :) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

16 But when Herod heard *thereof*, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded : he is risen from the dead.

17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife : for he had married her.

whatever for the giving up of this anointing. It is a great pity that those in authority in our branch of the Church do not give instructions for the restoration of this rite. Not that we are to suppose we may do without medical skill. The anointing should go hand in hand with the art of the doctor. By employing medicine and surgery we are doing what we can to help ourselves ; by anointing, and the prayer of faith, we call in the power of God. (In our first Prayer Book of 1552, compiled from the old English services and from other sources, this rite of anointing the sick was retained. The Roman Catholics administer 'extreme unction,' but this is an anointing of those who are not expected to recover—the sacrament of spiritual, not bodily, healing. The anointing or unction of the sick referred to in this comment must not be confounded with 'extreme unction' as practised by the Roman Church.)

14. Herod. Herod Antipas. His proper title was 'tetrarch,' or ruler of a fourth part of a kingdom. His kingdom or tetrarchy comprised Galilee and Peræa.

15. Elias—Elijah. The Jews thought that the prophet Elijah would again appear for the relief and restoration of his country. In Matt. 11. 14 we read : 'And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.' These words were spoken by our LORD in reference to John the Baptist, who had come in the spirit of the great prophet, introducing a new order of things—viz., the kingdom of God.

Or as one of the prophets. The best MSS. leave out 'or.' A 'prophet' means 'one who speaks on behalf of another.' In the Bible the word is used to signify one who spoke on behalf of God, and explained His will to man. In the course of this revealing of God's will the prophet sometimes referred to the future ; but prediction was not necessarily the prophet's office.

17. For Herodias' sake. Herodias was not only sister-in-law to Herod ; she was also his niece. What made it worse, if possible, was that Herod already had a wife, the daughter of Aretas, ruler of Arabia Petræa. Herod's unlawful passion proved his ruin. Aretas, in order to avenge the insult to his daughter, assembled an army and defeated Herod with great loss. This was not the only evil which came upon him through Herodias. Herod, under her prompting, went to Rome to seek the full title of king, but he was opposed by enemies at court,

18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:

20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief *estates* of Galilee;

22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give *it* thee.

23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give *it* thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

26 And the king was exceeding sorry; *yet* for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

28 And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

29 And when his disciples heard of *it*, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

and condemned to perpetual banishment. Herodias shared his punishment, and he died in exile.

19. Had a quarrel. 'Set herself against him.'

20. And observed him. This should run, 'and kept him safe'—*i.e.*, from her endeavours to kill him.

He did many things. The best MSS. read, 'he was much perplexed.'

21. To his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee. Literally, 'to his great ones, and to the chiliarchs and to the first (ones) of Galilee.' A chiliarch means 'captain of a thousand.'

22. Daughter. Her name was Salome. She was the daughter of Herodias by her previous marriage.

Danced. Somewhat like ballet-dancing, but with a pantomimic representation of passion of a degrading type.

25. By and by—*i.e.*, forthwith, immediately.

A charger—*i.e.*, that which is charged, or loaded; hence a large dish.

26. Exceeding sorry. The remembrance of this sin haunted him (see verse 16).

For his oath's sake. Better, far better, if the oath we have taken binds us to commit sin, to be true to God and false to our oath.

29. His disciples. The disciples of John.

31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while : for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

33 And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.

34 And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd : and he began to teach them many things.

35 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time *is* far passed :

36 Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread : for they have nothing to eat.

37 He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat ?

38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye ? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

31. Many coming and going. There were three great festivals for which the Jews went up to the Temple at Jerusalem—viz., the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost or of the First-fruits, and the Feast of Tabernacles, or Ingathering. It was now the time for the Passover, the feast which was much better attended than the other two, and the different companies were travelling towards the holy city.

32. And they departed in the boat. The desert place was in the north-east corner of the Lake of Gennesaret. They crossed the lake in their boat, and the people who saw them start from Capernaum ran round the end of the lake and met them as they landed. The miracles of healing had roused them to follow our LORD.

34. Sheep not having a shepherd. The expression appeals even to us. How much more forcible in a land where the sheep were in danger not only from the weather and the mountains, but also from savage beasts ready to devour the flock ! The Good Shepherd longed to save them, and so deep was His love that he shrank not from the sacrifice He saw in store for Him.

37. Two hundred pennyworth. The word in the original is the Latin word *denarius*, which was also used in the Greek language. The 'd' in '£ s. d.' stands for *denarius*, or 'penny.' When our Authorised Version or translation was made in 1611 the purchasing power of a penny was much greater than it is now. We can estimate its value best by noting that a day's wage for an agricultural labourer was a penny. So, roughly, the penny equals 2s. 6d.

39, 40. Observe the details mentioned. The scene made a lasting impression on Peter. He recalled it all most vividly :

41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave *them* to his disciples to set before them ; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

42 And they did all eat, and were filled.

43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

45 And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

46 And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

47 And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea and he alone on the land.

the pilgrims with their coloured robes, and the green grass as a background ; the orderly arrangement into long rows of a hundred and shorter ones of fifty.

41. And blessed. Grace before meat. Here is the highest authority for ' saying grace.' No man ever forgets to take food, and consequently, if this ancient custom were preserved, no one could ever forget God.

And gave. Literally, ' and He kept on giving them to the disciples to set before them.'

43. The baskets were small wicker baskets in which Jews carried their food to prevent defilement by the heathen. The word for ' basket ' in the miracle of feeding the four thousand means a large rope basket. When our LORD refers to these two miracles, it is interesting to notice that He makes the same distinction by using the two different words which are both translated ' basket.'

Fragments. A lesson of practical economy. There seems to be an enormous waste in Nature, but closer observation shows that this is not so. Nature is continually changing the use of material, but there is no waste. Our LORD here shows that the GOD of Nature wishes His people to observe a like care. The broken pieces might not, perhaps, be useful for man's food, but they could be put to some other good purpose, such as food for animals.

45. He constrained His disciples, etc. This miracle of feeding the five thousand reminded the people of Moses and the manna in the wilderness. Coming as the climax of our LORD's other miracles—for it appealed to them all, since all profited by it—they would have taken Him by force and made Him a King (see St. John 6. 14, 15). They hoped that in Him they saw ' the Prophet ' of whom Moses had spoken. The excitement was so intense that He had to constrain His disciples to go away while He dismissed the people.

46. A mountain. Not ' a ' mountain, but ' the ' mountain. One well known to Peter and the others.

48 And he saw them toiling in rowing ; for the wind was contrary unto them : and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out :

50 For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer : it is I ; be not afraid.

51 And he went up unto them into the ship ; and the wind ceased : and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

52 For they considered not *the miracle* of the loaves : for their heart was hardened.

48. The lake was about five or six miles wide, and the boat was now about half-way across (see St. John 6. 18). While our LORD was praying, His disciples were fighting the wind and the waves. It is a picture of CHRIST'S Church on earth now—it is the Church *militant* fighting against evil, and her LORD is ever living to make intercession on her behalf.

Fourth watch. The four watches of the night ended at 9 p.m., midnight, 3 a.m., and 6 a.m. These divisions were sometimes referred to as 'even,' 'midnight,' 'cock-crowing,' and 'morning.'

Would have passed by. Literally, 'was willing to pass by.' He wished to go before them and lead the way.

49. A spirit. The actual word is 'phantasm,' meaning 'an apparition.'

50. Immediately He talked with them. Our LORD would not suffer them to be troubled, even for a moment.

52. The words 'the miracle' are not in the original.

Their heart was hardened. Our LORD had shown conclusively that GOD'S providence was always working—feeding the five thousand was a manifestation of the fact. The Apostles seem to have soon forgotten; perhaps their buffeting with the wind and waves had wiped away the impression made upon them. Evidently miracles by themselves will not convert people. Some have demanded that they should have the testimony of miracles in these days, and they talk as if this is all that is required to make them faithful followers of our LORD. There are many things to be said in reply. The more frequent the miracles, the more their value as witnesses to GOD would be lessened. Another very important point is that we only acquire knowledge because GOD works in a *regular* fashion here. If there were no settled principles under which He worked, or, as we say, no laws of Nature, we should never know where we were. It is because we can always depend upon certain results, ascertained by experience, following certain causes, that we are able to build up the different sciences, and learn about the same.

So far as we can see, miracles have usually deeply troubled and frightened men, and have done nothing in comparison with the outpouring of the HOLY SPIRIT to convert souls. If we consider miracles as the breaking-in of the heavenly order of things upon earth, it is clear why they should naturally have occurred

53 And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,

55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment : and as many as touched him were made whole.

CHAPTER 7

THEN came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands off, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

4 And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

at the time of our LORD's life on earth. It is equally clear that they should have upset earthly-minded men (as the Apostles certainly were at this time), and, finally, we cannot expect they would happen again, except at some other decisive epoch in the world's history, when some fresh movement is made towards heavenly things.

54. They knew Him—*i.e.*, the people recognised Him.

56. In the streets. Translate, 'in the market-places.'

1. Which came from Jerusalem. Our LORD's enemies were combining their forces, and they began to dog His steps and spy out everything they could about Him.

2. Defiled—*i.e.*, common, ceremonially defiled.

3. St. Mark wrote his Gospel for Gentiles, so he explains Jewish customs with some care.

Wash their hands off. Translate, 'wash their hands with the fist.' To perform this ceremonial washing in the right way it was necessary to clench the fist. No doubt the disciples washed in the ordinary fashion, as forks were not used, and there was a common dish into which each thrust his hand. It would, naturally, cause objections to be made if anyone came with unwashen hands. The Pharisees, however, had made this washing a matter of ritual, and our LORD's disciples did not conform to their ritual, hence their complaint.

3. Tradition of the elders. Precepts handed down from age to age, and not written in the Scriptures.

4. Ceremonies are helps, or should be ; the Pharisees had made them burdens. A principle, no matter how good, may be reduced to an absurdity by applying it without any limit.

Of tables. The word should be 'couches'—*i.e.*, the couches on which they reclined at meals.

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands ?

6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me.

7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups : and many other such like things ye do.

9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother ; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death :

11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me ; *he shall be free.*

12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother ;

13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered : and many such like things do ye.

14 ¶ And when he had called all the people *unto him*, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one *of you*, and understand :

15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him : but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also ? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, *it* cannot defile him ;

19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats ?

20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

6. **Esaias**—Isaiah. The reference is to Isa. 29. 13.

7. **Teaching for doctrines.** Literally, 'teaching teachings.'

11. The translation in R.V. is, 'If a man shall say to his father or mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God.' 'Corban' means an offering made to God. It was only necessary to pronounce that a thing was 'Corban,' and it was devoted to God. But the hypocrisy of the situation was this : although the article was devoted to God, and the person who pronounced that it was 'Corban' must not give it to anyone, not even his parents, he might use it himself !

19. **Purging all meats.** According to the best MSS., there should be a note of interrogation after 'draught,' and the word 'purging' refers to our LORD. The translation should be : 'This He said, pronouncing all meats clean.' If we accept this reading, our LORD here puts an end to all the Jewish distinctions between kinds of food as being 'clean' or 'unclean.'

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness :

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

24 ¶ And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know *it* : but he could not be hid.

25 For a *certain* woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet :

26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation ; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled : for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* unto the dogs.

28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord : yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way ; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

21. Evil thoughts. No other teacher ever laid such stress on inward purity (holiness) as did our LORD. It is not enough to be good in word and deed : we must be good in thought and desire.

Adulteries, fornications. Adultery means unfaithfulness *after* marriage ; fornication is *unchastity* before marriage.

22. Covetousness. Literally, 'the desire to have more.' Greediness in every form is covetousness.

Lasciviousness. Intemperate use of pleasures of any kind, but especially immoderate and unlawful gratification of pleasure between the sexes.

Evil eye—envy.

Foolishness. Want of wisdom or prudence. A man is responsible for 'making a fool of himself,' whatever form his folly may take.

24. Tyre and Sidon. Two large Phœnician cities to the north of Palestine. Sidon was about fifty miles from Nazareth ; Tyre was several miles nearer.

26. A Greek. The term was applied to those who were not Jews, and who used the Greek language and customs. It means the same as 'Gentile' here. She was a Syro-Phœnician—that is, a Phœnician of Syria.

27. Dogs. The children were the Jews, and the dogs were the Gentiles. The word for 'dogs' means 'a little dog.' There were large, half-wild dogs which acted as scavengers, and there were the smaller dogs to be found in the house. The term 'dog' was one of reproach and contempt.

29. The devil—*i.e.*, the demon ; so, too, in verses 26 and 30.

NOTE.—In the account given by St. Matthew (15. 28) we read that our LORD answered : 'O woman, great is thy faith.' Our Church has taken her as a type of faith and humility, for her words are used in the Prayer of Humble Access, which comes just before the Prayer of Consecration in the Office for the Holy

30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

31 ¶ And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

32 And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

33 And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

36 And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;

37 And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

CHAPTER 8

IN those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and saith unto them,

2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

3 And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

Communion: 'We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table.'

In no case is the importance of persistence in prayer more brought out than in this miracle. Our LORD Himself seems to have placed obstacles in her way, but she used those obstacles as a weapon to gain her end. When our hopes are at their lowest ebb, then is the time for faith to exert its utmost effort, and to plead our very despair as an appeal to Almighty Love.

32. The man, being deaf, could have known but little about our LORD, so his friends bring him to obtain the blessing. It is another instance where the faith of those who bring a person to the LORD draws down the desired gift or *grace*.

33. Our LORD's power could, of course, act quite apart from outward signs. In this case He seems to wish to appeal to the man through the senses which were unimpaired—sight and touch. Saliva, or spit, was considered to have a medicinal property—indeed, it really has. But we are not to suppose that our LORD used it in this way; it was part of the symbolism He employed.

34. **Looking up to heaven.** To signify the source of the blessing about to be granted.

Ephphatha—the actual word used.

35. **The string.** The 'bond' of his tongue was loosed—*i.e.*, that which had prevented him talking distinctly was removed.

37. The last part should run: 'He maketh even the deaf to hear,' etc.

3. **Divers**—some of them.

4 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these *men* with bread here in the wilderness ?

5 And he asked them, How many loaves have ye ? And they said, Seven.

6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground : and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before *them* ; and they did set *them* before the people.

7 And they had a few small fishes : and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before *them*.

8 So they did eat, and were filled : and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets.

4. It might seem strange that the disciples should ask such a question, seeing that they had already witnessed the miracle of feeding the five thousand. In reply it may be noticed : (1) Our LORD had refused to perform miracles when bidden to do so as a sign, and the disciples were not sure whether this was an occasion of such deep need as would naturally call forth their Master's power. (2) Their question may have been put as a respectful suggestion to our LORD. (3) If they were really doubtful of our LORD's power to perform another miracle of feeding the multitude, it is only an illustration of a very common failing. We can all look back upon the past and see how God has cared for us, but in the time of trial we are so frequently tempted to think that He will fail us now. 'God has fed, clothed, and preserved us in danger for so long a time, but will He help us in this difficulty ?'

8. **Seven baskets.** The word for 'basket' is quite different from that word used with reference to the feeding of the five thousand.

NOTE.—The details of this miracle are very different from those of the other miracle of feeding the multitude. It seems hardly necessary to point out that our LORD performed *two* distinct miracles of feeding, yet there are those who pretend that the two accounts refer to one occurrence. No faithful Christian fears honest criticism of the Gospels ; we welcome it. But we ask for *unbiased* criticism. If anyone examines you as to the truth of a story you are telling, and before he has begun his questions he has already made up his mind you are a liar, or at best a very stupid person, where is the fairness or honesty of such an examination ? In olden times they tortured witnesses to compel them to say whatever they wished : in these days men torture and twist the Gospels to compel them to fall in with their own prejudices.

Suppose that in two thousand years' time an account is read of Queen Victoria, and the reader comes across references to *two* Jubilees. If he is a fair-minded man, he would accept the statement, although, undoubtedly, seeing that the word 'Jubilee' refers to a rejoicing after fifty years, it might seem very strange to read of *two* Jubilees so close together. According to the methods of some of our modern Bible critics, their representative two thousand years hence would argue something like

9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand : and he sent them away.

10 ¶ And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign ? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

14 ¶ Now *the disciples* had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

this : ' Jubilee is a festival which comes at the fiftieth year ; there could not be a Jubilee twice in one monarch's life ; therefore, in these accounts of *two* Jubilees the narrator has taken one event and split it into two.' Probably the sage critic would go on to infer : ' This bears out my theory that there was no such person as Victoria ; she is a quite mythical personage. The very word " Victoria " (victory) and the expression " Victorian Age," found in many writings of that period, go to prove that Victoria is a personification of a certain period in the nineteenth century,' etc.

10. Dalmanutha. On the west side of the Lake of Gennesaret, near Magdala.

11. Seeking of Him a sign from heaven. Tempting Him (' putting Him on His trial '). When any honest, faithful soul came to our LORD seeking help, even if it required a miracle to meet his request, the work was performed. But when the Pharisees, who had openly stated that they thought JESUS was in league with the devil, demand a miracle, the matter is very different. To help faith is one thing ; to stand at the bar of men's judgment, and at their command to show off almighty power, is quite another. Our LORD would have conclusively proved that He was *not* what He claimed to be if He had answered their insolent challenge in the way they wished.

People seek signs nowadays, and if their doubts are *honest* they deserve respectful sympathy. But, be it noted, there is a way which is bound to lead them into the truth. ' If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine ' (St. John 7. 17). *Let the honest doubter lead a clean life and follow the ideal set by JESUS, and in GOD'S good time he will learn the truth.* There are innumerable signs for those who keep their minds unclouded by sin, and who *really and truly* long for signs. The very existence of Christendom and the remarkable history of the Jews are two, amongst many, signs which must help every thoughtful person.

12. There shall no sign be given. The expression in the original is very strong. It means, ' May there be a curse if a sign shall be given to them.'

14. They had not expected to return so hurriedly. These details about their forgetting to take bread, etc., could only have been known to one who was actually present.

15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have no bread.

17 And when Jesus knew *it*, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

18 Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

22 ¶ And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25 After that he put *his* hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

15. Leaven. The ordinary leaven was a lump of old dough which had gone bad and was fermenting. The ferment from this lump spread through the mass of fresh dough in which it was placed. Naturally, leaven was usually (not always) a symbol of evil spreading within the man. The leaven of the Pharisees was hypocrisy; of the followers of Herod, worldliness.

16. Because we have no bread. The Apostles were very plain, matter-of-fact men. They were not fanciful dreamers or visionaries. They were intelligent enough, but were the last men in the world to be carried away by imagination. These references to their misunderstanding our LORD throw a valuable side-light on their character. They seem to have been the exact type of men required for *honest witnesses*. They were lacking in inventive power, and wanted to see things as clear as daylight before committing themselves.

19, 20. Baskets. Our LORD uses different words for baskets; in each case He applies the proper term as given in the accounts of the two different miracles.

22. Bethsaida. On the north-east coast of the Sea of Galilee.

23. Ought—i.e., anything.

24. Translate: 'I see men, for as trees I behold [them] walking.' This inability to distinguish plainly one object from another is just what has been noticed in the case of persons who, in modern times, have been restored to sight by medical skill. They have, when blind, pictured objects in their imagination, but these pictures are very different from the reality, and at first the faculty of seeing has to be carefully trained to recognise things, and to calculate distances.

25. Translate: 'Then again He placed His hands upon his eyes; and he looked steadfastly, and was restored, and he was seeing all things afar off.'

26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell *it* to any in the town.

27 ¶ And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi : and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am ?

28 And they answered, John the Baptist : but some *say*, Elias ; and others, One of the prophets.

29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am ? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer

NOTE.—Our LORD sometimes heals with a word, whether at a distance or close by the sufferer ; sometimes He uses outward and visible means ; sometimes the cure is immediate, and sometimes it is gradual. This miracle is of the last kind. Different cases require different treatment. We are treated with this same special and individual attention now ; our trials, cares, sorrows, or our helps, pleasures, and joys, are fitted for each of us, according to our capacity and needs.

27. **Cæsarea Philippi.** To the east of the River Jordan, and almost as far north as Tyre.

Whom do men say that I am ? Our LORD Himself knew, but He wanted to make them think, and so lead them on to the consideration of His next question.

29. **Whom say ye that I am ?** The question in the original is more emphatic : ‘ But you, whom do you say that I am ? ’ Our LORD wanted to see how far the truth had penetrated into their mind : His question would not only be a test—it would also help them to sum up their thoughts respecting Him and express them clearly. We may live with a person for years and never have clearly formed an estimate of his character. Then one day we are questioned about him, or we find ourselves compelled to place full trust in him in a way we have never done before ; and at such a crisis all the details, the words, manners, and habits of the person come before us, and for the first time we formulate an estimate of that person’s character. The question is, as it were, put, and we cannot help giving a clear answer. Henceforth that person is more fully known than before ; our appreciation is deepened. So the question of our LORD must have stimulated the Apostles to fuller and clearer thought about Him.

29. **Thou art the Christ.** Thou art the Anointed, the Messiah. ‘ CHRIST ’ is the Greek for ‘ Messiah.’

NOTE.—There is nothing said here of our LORD’s reply. See St. Matt. 16. 17, 18 : ‘ Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah . . . and I also say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this *petra* [rock] I will build my Church ’ (see comment on Chapter 3, verse 16). Peter modestly omits to remind Mark of this honourable address made to him, although he does not forget to mention the scathing rebuke given him (see verse 33).

31. **The Son of man must suffer.** A perfect man would be in touch with all, for no matter what their good point was, he

many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

34 ¶ And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

would also possess it, and thus be in sympathy. On the other hand, he would be out of touch with every one, for he would not meet another like himself, or even approaching him in his combination of qualities. The Son of man—*i.e.*, the perfect man—therefore must suffer, for He stood *alone*.

There is a very interesting passage in Plato's 'Republic,' a work written about four centuries before CHRIST, where a description is given of the ideal 'just' man, and an unconscious prophecy is added of what would happen to him if he ever existed. The words are : ' . . . The just man will be scourged, racked, fettered, will have his eyes burnt out, and at last, after suffering every kind of torture, will be crucified ' (' Republic,' book ii., p. 36, ed. Macmillan).

Our LORD realised to the full extent the strength of the opposition to His mission ; and as the hostility of the chief Jews became more determined, He foresaw that it could only have one end. *He* did not intend using force, but *they* would not shrink from it, and the result would be as He foretold His disciples.

32. And Peter took Him. ' And Peter took Him by the hand [or dress], and drew Him aside.' Presuming on the announcement by JESUS as to His being the 'Rock-man,' Peter began earnestly to remonstrate with our LORD. 'The Messiah was, surely, to found a glorious, world-wide kingdom; what was meant, then, by these gloomy forebodings of suffering?'

33. Get thee behind Me, Satan. 'Satan' means 'adversary.' A more crushing rebuke could not have been given.

Thou savourest—'Thou mindest.' Peter's idea of the kingdom was that of an earthly one, surpassing Rome in its magnificence and power. Our LORD came to found a *spiritual* kingdom, with an influence greater than any man could conceive. A spiritual kingdom must be founded by spiritual means, and evidently Peter had as yet grasped neither the nature of CHRIST's kingdom nor the forces which were to build it up. His interference savoured of the temptation offered to our LORD by Satan (see St. Matt. 4. 8, 9), and our LORD recognised the source of it.

34. Whosoever will come after Me. Translate : 'If any one willeth [has the will] to come after Me,' etc. The victim of crucifixion was made to carry the cross upon which He was to suffer. The expression would be readily understood by those

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?

38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation ; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

CHAPTER 9

AND he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

to whom our LORD spoke ; but not with that fullness of meaning which His death has produced. Cross-bearers, in general, were suffering justly ; JESUS CHRIST suffered *unjustly*, yet took up the cross without murmuring. Many fail to see this distinction, but it is a most important one. The shattered nerves and ruined health of a drunken profligate are *not* a cross in the sense in which CHRIST uses the word here : they are the unavoidable result of vice. But if a man performs a good act and as a consequence suffers in health or wealth, that is a cross.

35. Shall lose it. There is the earthly, physical life, and there is the heavenly, spiritual life. It is the latter which will be lost if we cling too much to the former.

Shall save it. If we give up the things of the earthly life for CHRIST's sake, we shall reap eternal salvation.

36, 37. Soul. This is the same word which is translated 'life' in verse 35. Man consists of body, soul, and spirit. The body enables him to correspond with the things of earth, and so to exist as regards his earthly life. The spirit enables him to correspond with GOD, and so to enter into spiritual and eternal life. The soul is the seat of personality, 'and man became a living soul' (Gen. 2. 7). The soul being the centre, as it were, it sometimes refers to the earthly side of man's life and sometimes to the heavenly. The context—*i.e.*, the verses which go before and after a text—determines the exact shade of meaning of 'soul.' In these two verses 'soul' probably means the higher life.

38. Adulterous. Adultery is disloyalty to the natural object of one's affections, a shameful disregard of a holy bond. The Jews were, by rejecting CHRIST, adulterous and sinful.

1. This verse should have been included in Chapter 8. In the original MSS. there are no divisions into chapters and verses, and in some instances those who made these divisions have not chosen the most suitable arrangement. The Scriptures were in early times divided into sections for convenience in referring to them, but the division into chapters is the work of Hugh de St. Cher in the thirteenth century. The New Testament was first divided into verses in the edition of Robert Stevens (A.D. 1551).

2 ¶ And after six days Jesus taketh *with him* Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves : and he was transfigured before them.

3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow ; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses : and they were talking with Jesus.

Verily—‘ Truly.’ The actual word is ‘ Amen.’ Our LORD uses the word to introduce a statement to which He wishes to particularly call attention.

Kingdom of God come with power. All save Judas were alive when the day of Pentecost came, and then were baptized into the kingdom three thousand souls (see Acts 2).

2. High mountain. Probably one of the peaks of Hermon in the North of Palestine.

Transfigured—i.e., transformed. His outward appearance was changed. From St. Luke 9. 29 we find that this change took place while our LORD was praying.

3. The hidden nature will sometimes shine through the most homely features and beautify them. In our best moments we are transfigured as if already we anticipate the immortal body. In the case of the one perfect Man the transfiguration was for a short space complete. The inner glory of CHRIST’s person broke through the surface, and prophesied His future state of exaltation, which was consummated at the ascension.

It was a revelation of CHRIST’s nature which His Apostles, indeed, required. Our LORD had been speaking to them about His passion (suffering), and they had completely failed to grasp what He said ; it had filled them with dismay. Their Master did not withdraw His words, or water down their meaning, but as an encouragement to their damped faith He vouchsafed this witness of His transfiguration.

4. Elias with Moses. Moses, the great law-giver, and Elijah (Elias), the most zealous of the prophets. Their appearance betokened that our LORD’s work was not an entirely new departure. JESUS CHRIST came to develop, or fulfil, the law and the prophets. There was continuity from Moses and Elijah to JESUS CHRIST ; indeed, the law and the prophets simply prepared the way for that Gospel which was the substance, the fulfilment of type and prophecy.

Talking with Jesus. From St. Luke 9. 31 we see that Moses and Elijah were talking of ‘ the departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.’ Moses died when ‘ his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated,’ and his body was the care of Michael the archangel (St. Jude 9). Elijah was carried up by a whirlwind into heaven with ‘ chariot of fire and horses of fire ’ (2 Kings 2. 11). There was something unusual about the departure from earth of both these good men. May not the theme of their conversation with CHRIST be suggestive ? At this moment of our LORD’s glorious transformation He might

5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here : and let us make three tabernacles ; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

6 For he wist not what to say ; for they were sore afraid.

7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them : and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son : hear him.

8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

11 ¶ And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come ?

12 And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things ; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.

have deservedly expected to make His departure to heaven in a way different from other men : the presence of Moses and Elijah would naturally suggest it. But JESUS was determined to be the Saviour of mankind, so they spake of suffering which awaited Him—the departure [decease] which He was about to accomplish, not then, but at Jerusalem.'

5. Master. In the original, ' Rabbi.'

Tabernacles—*i.e.*, booths. Peter wished to prolong the scene, and proposed that they should erect booths, as they were accustomed to do at the Feast of Tabernacles.

6. Wist not—*i.e.*, knew not.

7. This is My beloved Son. Three times this voice was heard during our LORD'S ministry—at His baptism, at the transfiguration, and just before the crucifixion. Peter refers to this scene and the voice in his Second Epistle (i. 16-18).

10. What the rising from the dead should mean. They were perfectly familiar with the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, but could not make out what it had to do with the Messiah.

11. Elias must first come. Not only the scribes said this : it was in the Scriptures (see Mal. 4. 5).

13. Listed—*i.e.*, willed.

12, 13. John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah (see St. Matt. 11. 14 : ' And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, which is to come'). The Jewish kingdom was at its lowest ebb when John came : Herod their king was not a Jew by birth, and even in religion he was half a heathen ; moreover, the Jewish nation had to pay tribute to Rome. John heralded the kingdom of CHRIST, and thus restored the kingdom of the Jews, although not an earthly, but a spiritual, kingdom. But just as the Son of man must fulfil His destiny and suffer—for He was rejected by the nation—so John the Baptist, the herald of the kingdom, had suffered.

13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

14 ¶ And when he came to *his* disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to *him* saluted him.

16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them ?

17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit ;

18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him : and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away : and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out ; and they could not.

19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you ? how long shall I suffer you ? bring him unto me.

20 And they brought him unto him : and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him ; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him ? And he said, Of a child.

22 And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters to destroy him : but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us and help us.

23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things *are* possible to him that believeth.

14. The scribes questioning with them. The contrast is like that between the Church triumphant and the Church militant. Our LORD was with Moses and Elijah, and in glory on the mount above. His disciples were striving with the evil spirit and disputing with the scribes below.

15. Greatly amazed. When Moses came down from the mount of old, his face bore traces of the glory which he had received. It would seem as if our LORD retained somewhat of His transfiguration, and so caused this great amazement.

17. A dumb spirit. The spirit rendered him unable to speak, but he could cry out (see St. Luke 9. 39).

20. And when he saw him. The 'he' refers to the man's son, and not to the spirit.

23. If thou canst believe. The original runs ' [Do you say] if thou canst ! All things are possible to him that believeth.' Our LORD always emphasises the importance of faith. We exercise this faculty so unconsciously in everyday life that we overlook the fact that faith is *absolutely necessary*, even in the things of this world. Faith in our own power, faith in others ; faith in the regularity of Nature—our whole life takes its impulse from faith. All the wonders achieved by invention—the railway, telegraph, electric light, etc.—were accomplished because there were faithful ones who said to themselves : ' I believe it can be done,' and then did it. We need not be surprised, therefore, when we are told of the necessity of faith in matters spiritual : the spiritual world and the natural world are from the same Almighty Hand, and there is bound to be analogy between the two.

24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief.

25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, *Thou* dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

26 And *the spirit* cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him : and he was as one dead ; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up ; and he arose.

28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out ?

29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

30 ¶ And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee ; and he would not that any man should know *it*.

31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him ; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

33 ¶ And he came to Capernaum : and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way ?

34 But they held their peace : for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who *should be* the greatest.

35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, *the same* shall be last of all, and servant of all.

36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them : and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me : and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

24. I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief. Many an earnest soul in the stress of doubt and sorrow has echoed this most natural expression of the human heart.

29. And fasting. These words are wanting in one of the best MSS., but there is a strong probability in favour of their being correct. In the face of certain evil powers a more intense faith is required to overcome. Englishmen are apt to sneer at the ascetic life ('ascetic' means 'exercised in religious duties,' such as prayer and fasting), but there is no doubt that this type of life is of vast importance. In these days of worshipping the idols of comfort and luxury, when numbers are possessed with the foul spirit of vice and wanton pleasure, the ascetic life is a standing protest, and an instrument to help in casting out the demon which is dominating our nation.

34. The greatest—'The greater.' Perhaps the Apostles had in mind the fact that our LORD had chosen Peter, James, and John to be with Him on the mount, and this may have roused jealousy. It is hardly necessary to say how utterly they must have misunderstood the nature of our LORD's kingdom to be engaged in such a dispute.

37. Him that sent Me—God.

38 ¶ And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us : and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.

39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not : for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

40 For he that is not against us is on our part.

41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

42 And whosoever shall offend one of *these* little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

38. Translate : ' Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in thy name.'

Followeth not us. The spirit of a partisan, rather than indignation at an evil, prompted the action. Had John been as zealous for good and for the manifestation of the power of JESUS as he was for his party, he would not have forbidden anyone to cast out demons in the name of his Master.

40. Compare this verse with St. Matt. 12. 30 : ' He that is not with Me is against Me.' The two passages give different aspects of the same truth. Both Churchmen and Dissenters may study these passages with gain to the cause of the union of Christendom. Our LORD, on the one hand, said nothing to encourage the notion that a visible unity is unimportant. He chose the Apostles and carefully trained them for the ministry. He spoke to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of GOD (the Church), as we read in Acts 1. 3. Acting on His instructions, the Apostles carefully organised the Church, and admitted converts by baptism. They administered confirmation, or the laying on of hands (Acts 8. 17). The Holy Communion was their central act of worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20. 7). Nowhere are we led to suppose that CHRIST's followers were to be like one of those lowest types of life—structureless and unorganised. On the other hand, our LORD would not refuse to recognise anyone who did good in His name, even if that person had not yet been formally admitted into communion with His other followers. Organisation is not intended to cramp and limit the power of JESUS. God is not tied down to certain channels of grace to the exclusion of any other means. We are in a state of safety when baptized into the ark of CHRIST's Church, but we may not condemn those who, through ignorance or lack of opportunity, have not yet been admitted into that same condition.

42. **One of these little ones that believe in Me.** Probably those referred to are children, but the word translated ' little ' also means ' few ' and ' humble,' so there is good reason for supposing our LORD's words were intended as a warning to the Apostles against interfering with anyone who did works in His name outside their band.

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched :

44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched :

46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out : it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire :

48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

42. Millstone. 'Millstone of the kind turned by an ass,' therefore a large one. The ordinary millstones were turned by hand.

If thy hand offend thee, cut it off. The principle contained in this emphatic metaphor ('metaphor' means 'speaking of one thing under the form of another') is that which makes a man tempted to drunkenness become a total abstainer. Drink 'offends' him—*i.e.*, causes him to stumble—so he cuts off drink altogether. There are other sins besides drunkenness where the principle must be applied ; the only way of safety is entire withdrawal from that which, although lawful in itself, may lead us astray.

43. Hell. This is an unfortunate translation. The word is 'Gehenna.' ('Hell' means 'the abode of the departed spirits,' and may refer to either Paradise or Gehenna.)

Never shall be quenched. Translate : 'The fire not extinguished.' The metaphor used by our LORD was quite familiar to His Apostles. At the south of Jerusalem was a valley called the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, or Gehenna. Here in olden times there had been offered as sacrifices to Moloch little children, who were roasted alive in the red-hot arms of a monstrous brass idol (see 2 Kings 23. 10). Afterwards the refuse from the Temple sacrifices was burnt there by fires which 'were not extinguished.' All the filth of the city was emptied there, and 'the worm died not,' being ever busy with its horrible meal. Seeing that Gehenna had these hideous associations, it was only natural to use the expression to indicate the state of the lost after death ; they passed to that part of hell which is a veritable Gehenna, where the fires of remorse are not quenched, and where the gnawing of conscience is continuous as the worm which day and night devours its loathsome spoil.

45. Halt—*i.e.*, crippled.

Cut it off. The *hand* may do that which leads to sin ; the *foot* may carry us where we are tempted to sin ; the *eye* may look at that which prompts to sin : in each case we must apply the principle of total abstinence.

49. Fire destroys whatever has the element of decay (badness) in it, or converts it into a more useful form. Salt preserves

50 Salt is good : but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

CHAPTER 10

AND he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judæa by the farther side of Jordan : and the people resort unto him again ; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

whatever is good. Voluntary self-denial is a fire which purifies, and converts our evil tendencies into good ones.

The words 'every sacrifice shall be salted with salt' are not found in some MSS. In Lev. 2. 13 we read, 'With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.' Salt was a token of perpetual friendship and covenant ; it signified the firmness of the tie between Jehovah and His people. The sacrifice made in self-denial (the cutting off of the hand, eye, and foot) would be held in memorial before God ; it would be salted with salt as a symbol that it was an acceptable offering. Compare the prayer in the Holy Communion Office : 'And here we offer and present unto Thee, O LORD, ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee.'

50. The salt used was obtained from a valley at the south of the Dead Sea. It was mixed with many impurities, and sometimes, by exposure, lost 'his saltness.' The followers of CHRIST were to be the salt of the earth, preserving all that was good, but such disputations as those in which they had been engaged (verse 34) showed they were losing savour. Instead of discussing their relative greatness, let them take salt together—the symbol of peace.

NOTE.—Neither St. Mark nor any one of the Evangelists tells *all* the events of our LORD's life. For instance, we gather from the Gospels of St. Luke and St. John that between the events recorded in Chapters 9 and 10 the following incidents occurred :

The visit of our LORD to Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Discourses during the feast.

The opening of the eyes of one born blind.

Ministrations in Judæa.

Tour in Peræa.

Raising of Lazarus.

Resolve of the Sanhedrin to put Him to death, etc.

One Gospel narrative helps to fill up the gaps left by the others. But all put together do not give the complete history, for (see St. John 21. 25) 'There are also many other things which JESUS did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.'

2 ¶ And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife ? tempting him.

3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you ?

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away.

5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife ;

8 And they twain shall be one flesh : so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*.

11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

2. Tempting Him—*i.e.*, putting Him on trial.

4. In Deut. 24. 1, we read that if a man found ' something unseemly ' (Revised Version) in his wife, he was allowed to divorce her by making out a written document to that effect.

5, 6. They were trying to get our LORD to say something against the law of Moses. In reply He explained that their great law-giver had given them this precept because they were too hard-hearted to act up to the original ideal given them in Gen. 1. 27. Our LORD's answer convicted them of intractability, and He quoted Scripture to prove that Moses had purposely lowered the standard of the marriage tie as a matter of adaptation to a weak morality.

7, 8. The relation between son and parents was close, but that between husband and wife was even closer—they became ' one flesh.'

9. These words are used as part of our Marriage Service.

11, 12. This statement is qualified in St. Matt. 5. 32: ' Whosoever shall put away his wife, *saving for the cause of fornication*, causeth her to commit adultery.' It seems clear that there is only one cause of divorce—*viz.*, fornication or unchastity before marriage. In such a case the woman is already bound to her seducer before she goes through the form of marriage. The man to whom she first yields herself is, or must be looked upon as, her husband ; consequently the form of marriage with another is meaningless.

By laying down this principle, our LORD raised the position of woman from being a drudge, or mere instrument of pleasure, to an equality with man in the family. Christianity would deserve the most careful consideration even if it had done nothing else than this—elevating woman to her proper sphere, and safeguarding children against the evil consequences caused by laxity in the matter of divorce. It must never be overlooked that the sanctity of the marriage tie affects not only husband

12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

13 ¶ And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them : and *his* disciples rebuked those that brought *them*.

14 But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not : for of such is the kingdom of God.

15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

16 And he took them up in his arms, put *his* hands upon them, and blessed them.

17 ¶ And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life ?

and wife, but also their offspring ; and thus it affects the well-being of the whole nation. (Until the sixteenth century divorce could be obtained when unchastity *before* marriage—fornication—was proved ; separation, but not remarriage, could be obtained when unchastity after marriage—adultery—was proved.)

13. Young children. In St. Luke 18. 15 we read ' infants.'

Touch them. ' Lay hands upon them.' From time immemorial the laying on of hands has been the customary symbol of blessing. Jewish children were often brought to the presiding elder of a synagogue, or to some great Rabbi, to be blessed in this way.

13, 16. These words form the Gospel in the Service for the Administration of the Public Baptism of Infants. It is extraordinary how in the face of this passage anyone finds a difficulty in infant baptism. ' For of such is the kingdom of God.' Not only were children to be admitted into CHRIST's Church (the kingdom of God), but the childlike character, simplicity and humility, was required of every one who was brought into the kingdom. If those of a childlike character were to be admitted, how much more readily must the child himself be admitted ! There are, of course, many other arguments for infant baptism—*e.g.* : (1) It is analogous to circumcision, the covenant rite for infants under the Old Dispensation. (2) Our LORD's last charge to His disciples was to ' go and baptize all nations ' ; it is impossible to find a nation without children forming an integral part of it. (3) No one questioned infant baptism until about A.D. 200, and from the references then made to the practice we find it was always the custom in the primitive Church.

The action of the Apostles in rebuking those who brought children to CHRIST may have been done out of consideration for our LORD, who most likely was tired out. But whatever the cause, when JESUS saw it, He was *pained* (the exact meaning of the original). Surely our LORD must be still more pained when He sees His commands disobeyed now. The Apostles may have had some excuse for their mistake ; those who keep the little ones from the Saviour *now* have no excuse.

17. What shall I do ? It was the wrong question altogether. Eternal life is not a reward for so much good work ; when we

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God.*

19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

23 ¶ And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

have done everything commanded 'we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do' (St. Luke 17. 10). It is what we *are*, not what we do. The childlike character—simple, trusting, humble, obedient, counting love above all things—this is the qualification desired.

18. The word 'why' is emphatic. Our LORD asks, 'What is your reason for calling Me good? God alone is good.' From what follows, it would seem that our LORD is probing the young man's heart, to see whether he recognised in Him merely a good Rabbi or the SON of GOD.

19. Notice that only those commandments are mentioned which refer to our duty to our neighbour. Our LORD intends pointing out afterwards the young man's duty to GOD, and does so in verse 21—'follow Me.'

20. There was probably self-satisfaction lurking in this statement, but there must also have been a good deal of truth, for the words impressed our LORD in a remarkable way.

21. **Then Jesus beholding him loved him.** 'Beholding' is, literally, 'having looked into him.' The word for 'love' means to 'have an affection for' anyone; there is another word translated 'to love,' implying a much warmer state of the feelings. Our LORD now makes the demand upon the young man which calls his attention to his duty to GOD. It was also a demand which no ordinary Rabbi, however good, could justly make. Such a tremendous sacrifice was an offering which GOD might claim, therefore our LORD claims it. ('Take up the cross' is not in some MSS.)

23. **How hardly, etc.** 'How, with difficulty.' The young man was an instance of the truth.

24. **Were astonished.** The disciples still thought the Messianic kingdom was to be an earthly one, and supposed that material prosperity, so far from preventing anyone entering, would be the lot of all those who had entered.

25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved ?

27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God : for with God all things are possible.

28 ¶ Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions ; and in the world to come eternal life.

31 But many *that are* first shall be last ; and the last first.

32 ¶ And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem ; and Jesus went before them : and they were amazed ; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him.

33 *Saying*, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes ; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles :

34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him : and the third day he shall rise again.

25. It is easier for a camel, etc. It has been suggested that the 'needle's eye' meant the small gate for foot-passengers which was called in the East 'the eye of a needle.' But the saying may be taken literally ; it was simply a proverb expressing something impossible, or most unlikely to happen.

27. With men it is impossible, etc. God's grace can alone draw the heart of man from the world to Him.

28. Peter, the impulsive spokesman, probably put into words the thought which occurred to all the rest.

30. This was particularly true in the earliest days of Christianity, when they had all things common (see Acts 2. 44, 45). It was the mark of Christians to show love one to another, and their common title was 'the brethren.' Those who followed CHRIST found their homes in a hundred houses, and they could call a hundred fellow-members of CHRIST 'sister' or 'brother.' But our LORD was perfectly frank, and reminded them that to their portion would be added 'persecutions.'

31. Notice that Peter himself, the 'first amongst equals,' was for a time *last* when he denied his LORD. Judas became last for ever. Paul was last when he persecuted the Christians, but in the end was 'not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles' (2 Cor. 11. 5).

33, 34. The future was mapped out clearly in our LORD's mind. He knew what was in man, and was therefore able accurately to foresee what would be the result of the enmity of the Jewish rulers towards Him.

35 ¶ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you ?

37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask : can ye drink of the cup that I drink of ? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ?

39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of ; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized :

40 But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give ; but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared.

41 And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

42 But Jesus called them *to him*, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them ; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you : but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister :

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

35. We have here an interesting contrast. While our LORD was thinking of the great sacrifice He was about to make, and telling His disciples of it with such insistence that ' they were amazed,' James and John came asking for the posts of honour in His kingdom. Their Teacher speaks of self-denial and suffering : they persistently think of glory and rewards. If there is one thing more certain than another about JESUS, it is this : He never for one moment yielded to the natural desire to ingratiate Himself with his followers. He neither fulfilled their idea of the Messiah nor tried to win them by promises of worldly things. He simply spoke the truth, and so, in the end, conquered in spite of prejudice and dullness of apprehension.

38. **Ye know not what ye ask.** They thought they were asking for posts of honour in an earthly kingdom, but to sit on the right and left of JESUS meant to drink the cup of sorrow, and to be baptized with the baptism of trial.

39. **Ye shall indeed drink of the cup, etc.** James was martyred ' with the sword ' (see Acts 12. 2). John suffered imprisonment and exile, and was the last of the Apostles to pass away. Whether he perished by a violent death or in the ordinary course of nature cannot be said with certainty.

43. **Minister.** The word in the original is ' deacon,' and has been brought into use in our language. ' Deacon ' means ' an attendant ' ; the word was applied to the seven who were ordained to attend to the wants of the poor in the early Church (see Acts 6). The title ' deacon ' is still used to designate the third order of the ministry. Of course, our LORD did not employ the word in this latest meaning.

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

46 ¶ And they came to Jericho : and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, sat by the highway side begging.

47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, *thou* son of David, have mercy on me.

48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace : but he cried the more a great deal, *Thou* son of David, have mercy on me.

49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise ; he calleth thee.

50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way ; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

CHAPTER 11

AND when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

45. A ransom for many. The word translated 'ransom' means 'loosing-money.' The word for 'many' frequently means 'all' ; it does so here. It is the same word used in Rom. 5. 19, where it also must mean 'all.' The Atonement (at-one-ment), or reconciliation through JESUS CHRIST, is a *fact*. There are many ways, however, of looking at a fact. Here our LORD speaks of giving His life to loose from the power of sin and the eternal consequences of sin. His sacrifice on the cross was, and is, that which redeems us from our dread bondage.

46. Jericho—'the city of palms.' A large and important town, about twenty miles from Jerusalem, full of historical associations.

A great number of people. They were on their way to Jerusalem for the great festival of the Passover.

Bartimæus. The best reading is : 'the son of Timæus, Bartimæus.' 'Bar' means 'son of.' By the way in which he is mentioned, he was probably well known to the early Christians. Beggars seized the opportunity, when the Jews were on their way to their great festivals, to haunt the roads along which they passed, and reaped a good harvest from the gifts made to them.

47. Son of David—*i.e.*, the Messiah. It was expected that the Messiah would be of the seed of David ; our LORD's descent is traced from that great king in the first chapter of St. Matthew.

50. Casting away his garment. His outer garment or mantle—a large square shawl, probably woollen. ('Rose,' in R.V., 'sprang up.')

51. Lord. Literally 'Rabboni,' the highest title of honour.

1. Bethphage and Bethany. Two little villages on the way to Jerusalem from Jericho.

2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you : and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat ; loose him and bring *him*.

3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this ? say ye that the Lord hath need of him ; and straightway he will send him hither.

4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met ; and they loose him.

5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt ?

6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded : and they let them go.

7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him ; and he sat upon him.

8 And many spread their garments in the way : and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed *them* in the way.

9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna ; Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord :

10 Blessed *be* the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord : Hosanna in the highest.

11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple : and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

2. A colt . . . whereon never man sat. Our LORD now determined to publicly show Himself as the Messiah ; it was to be a final appeal to the Jewish nation. From Zech. 9. 9, it was expected that the Messiah would enter the Holy City 'lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass.' The horse was used especially for war, and the ass for peace ; the latter was, therefore, peculiarly appropriate for Him who sat thereon. It is hardly necessary to say that the specimens of this animal which we see in England do not compare with those of the East ; they are larger, swifter, and finer-looking than ours. The ass was associated in the minds of the people with many honourable distinctions : Moses led his wife, seated on an ass, to Egypt ; the judges rode on asses ; asses were the special care of one of David's officers. An unused animal was considered appropriate for sacred purposes. St. Matthew mentions the mother of the colt as well, which shows that it was taken straight from the mother for its first task. The owner may have been a disciple of our LORD already ; if they mentioned His name and His need of the colt, there would be no obstacle to their borrowing the animal.

8. Cut down branches. The fronds of the palm-branches matted together. Hence the name of the day upon which we commemorate this event—viz., Palm Sunday.

9, 10. 'Hosanna' means 'Save, we pray.' This acclamation of praise seems to be chiefly a reminiscence of Ps. 118. 25. It seemed like a recognition of JESUS CHRIST as Messiah. From St. Luke 19. 39 we see that certain Pharisees, with some indignation, asked our LORD to rebuke those who raised these cries. 'No,' was the answer ; 'I tell you that if these are silent, the very stones will cry out.'

12 ¶ And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry :

13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon : and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves ; for the time of figs was not *yet*.

14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard *it*.

15 ¶ And they come to Jerusalem : and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves ;

14. No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. The leaves on the tree might lead anyone to expect the first ripe fruits, or, in any case, there might be some of the autumn figs, which often hang upon the tree all through the winter. (It is an interesting coincidence that as I write these words I can see the fresh leaves of a fig-tree just outside my window. The time is June, and this is not yet the season for figs, but there are still two or three of last year's figs on the tree, and one of this year's.) Our LORD seized the opportunity to convey a most solemn lesson. The Jews had just made open protestation of their allegiance by their glad 'Hosannas' ; it remained to be seen whether they would bring forth the fruit which might be expected. The destruction of the barren fig-tree was a warning to those who could understand the parable ; it was also a prophecy which was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. The incident has also its application to nations and individuals for all time. Be it observed that this, the only miracle of just retribution performed by our LORD, was directed against a non-suffering tree.

15. Temple. This word is applied, not merely to the sanctuary itself, but also to the courts and cloisters in connexion with it. The Temple proper consisted of the Holy of Holies, the innermost shrine, which was only entered once a year by the high-priest on the day of Atonement ; and the Holy Place, which was twice the size of the Holy of Holies, and was in connexion with it. In the Holy Place were the golden candlestick, with its seven lamps ; the table of shewbread ; and the altar of incense. Before the entrance of the Holy Place stood the great altar of burnt-offering, and the brazen laver in which the priests washed hands and feet before their duties. Outside the enclosure containing the great altar, etc., was a large space known as the Inner Court. Surrounding this court were various chambers for the accommodation of the priests, etc. Then came another large space, the Court of the Gentiles. Surrounding this court were the beautiful cloisters composed of double rows of Corinthian columns.

In the Outer Court had been established a market for the sale of victims, incense, oil and wine used for the sacrifices. Money-changers did a large business with those who had come up to the feast from foreign parts. The doves were for offerings, and great profits were made out of their sale. Notice that our LORD

16 And would not suffer that any man should carry *any* vessel through the temple.

17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

18 And the scribes and chief priests heard *it*, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people were astonished at his doctrine.

19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

20 ¶ And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

overthrows the *tables* of the money-changers, but the *seats* of them that sold doves.

16. The precincts of the Temple were not to be used as a thoroughfare for porters.

17. **A den of thieves**—‘a den of robbers.’ The pilgrims who came up to the feast were bound to purchase what was needed for their religious obligations; also, the yearly Temple tax was not accepted unless paid in a coin called the ‘Temple shekel,’ so that they were obliged, even if for that alone, to go to the money-changers. This opened the way for all manner of extortion. It is significant that not a hand was raised against our LORD: His act and words awakened many slumbering consciences and inspired fear even in the Temple officials.

18. **How they might destroy Him.** Our LORD’s action touched them in their pockets. The priests had prostituted their sacred calling for the sake of gain. They had a right to expect a living, but not to turn the Temple into a market-place. Unfortunately, when men have been long accustomed to obtaining money in a certain way, although quite illegal, they conceive that the very custom itself annuls the illegality. So our LORD drew upon Himself the enmity of those whose ‘vested interests’ were threatened.

23. **Shall say unto this mountain.** A common expression amongst the Jewish Rabbis was, ‘He is a remover of mountains,’ meaning, ‘He is able to remove difficulties apparently as hard to move as a mountain.’

23, 24. From these verses we infer that there is no limit to what we may ask for in prayer, except the one laid down in our LORD’s prayer—viz., ‘Thy will be done.’ As far as we can see, it is God’s will that this world should be one of order and regularity; man has no right to expect that that order (laws of Nature) should be turned upside down every minute to suit his purpose. If one falls off a house, he can hardly expect that the

25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any : that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

27 ¶ And they come again to Jerusalem : and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,

28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things ? and who gave thee this authority to do these things ?

29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

30 The baptism of John, was *it* from heaven, or of men ? answer me.

31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven ; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him ?

32 But if we shall say, Of men ; they feared the people : for all *men* counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

law of gravity should be suspended in his favour ; but he might well pray that the consequences of his fall be as light as possible, and that he may have ' grace in time of need ' to suffer patiently.

Man's control of the material world is to be sought by learning God's will as expressed in laws, and by utilising those laws to enable him to accomplish what he requires. Faith in God bids us hope that the day will come when the material world will be under our entire control. Already we accomplish wonders which would seem incredible in the days of our LORD. That faith will be able to carry us much farther still in ' moving mountains ' is ably put by Sir James Crichton-Browne, M.D., who says : ' It becomes more and more apparent that, although matter is the vehicle of mind, it [matter] is dominated, transcended, and moulded by it.'

25. Trespasses. The word in the original means ' a falling away ' from right, truth, or duty. One who has sufficient love to forgive his neighbour has arrived at that condition which fits him for forgiveness by God.

27. Chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders. The supreme council of the Jews consisted of a body called the ' Sanhedrin.' The members of the Sanhedrin were the high-priest ; the chief priests—*i.e.*, those who had held the office of high-priest—and the heads of the twenty-four classes into which the priests were divided ; elders—men of age and experience ; and scribes. This council sent a deputation to our LORD, consisting of representatives of each class.

28. By what authority. Our LORD was not a properly commissioned teacher in the eyes of the rulers, as He had no license from the scribes. Was He acting, therefore, on a Divine authority ?

31. Why then did ye not believe him ? John the Baptist had pointed out JESUS CHRIST as the Messiah.

CHAPTER 12

AND he began to speak unto them by parables. *A certain man* planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about *it*, and digged a *place* for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

3 And they caught *him*, and beat him, and sent *him* away empty.

4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away shamefully handled.

5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

6 Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be our's.

8 And they took him, and killed *him*, and cast *him* out of the vineyard.

9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

1. Winefat. The wine-press had a trough above, where the grapes were placed and trodden by the feet; the juice thus pressed out flowed into the 'fat'—*i.e.*, vat—underneath. The vat was often hewn or dug out of the solid rock.

Tower. A watch-tower where the vine-dressers, or husbandmen, lived, and watched to keep off wild animals and robbers.

2. Might receive . . . of the fruit. The rent was paid in 'kind'—*i.e.*, not in money, but by part of the produce.

3-8. Notice how they proceed from one sin to another of a worse character. The climax of their guilt is reached when they determine to secure possession of the vineyard altogether by killing the heir, the only son, the well-beloved.

10, 11. A quotation from Ps. 118. 22. The stone 'in the head of the corner' was a very important one, binding the sides of the building together, and uniting it strongly to the foundations.

1-11. God's vineyard was His people Israel, separated from the heathen, and hedged in by the Mosaic law. The husbandmen were the very men whom our LORD addressed—the chief priests, scribes, and elders. The servants, sent to claim the fruits of righteousness, were the prophets. The Jewish rulers, both those to whom JESUS CHRIST spake and those who had been before them, had stoned, ill-treated, and killed God's messengers. At last God sent His only-begotten Son, the well-beloved, the Messiah, and now they were conspiring against His life. What the end would be our LORD foresaw—they would kill Him. What the result would be He equally foresaw: He

12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people : for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them : and they left him, and went their way.

13 ¶ And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in *his* words.

14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man : for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth : Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not ?

15 Shall we give, or shall we not give ? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me ? bring me a penny, that I may see *it*.

16 And they brought *it*. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription ? And they said unto him, Cæsar's.

17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

was rejected by them, but He would be the Corner-stone in the kingdom of GOD. Moreover, GOD would let out the vineyard to other husbandmen : the call would be made to the Gentiles, and they would respond. The deep impression caused by this last pronouncement is betokened by the exclamation made by some standing there—' God forbid !' (St. Luke 20. 16).

14. Carest for no man. They attempted to flatter our LORD by speaking of Him as one strong and fearless, and who would express His opinions regardless of what anybody might think.

Cæsar. The title of the Roman Emperor ; compare the title of the Russian and German Emperors—Czar, Kaiser. The Cæsar at that time was Tiberius, one of the most unscrupulous and suspicious monsters who disgraced a throne.

15. Why tempt ye Me ? His enemies laid a trap for Him. If He said, ' It is unlawful,' they would charge Him with disloyalty to Cæsar ; if He said, ' It is lawful,' they would charge Him with want of patriotism as a Jew.

16. Superscription. The image was the head of Tiberius. The superscription, or writing running round it, was his name.

17. Render to Cæsar, etc. It was a recognised principle amongst the Jews that ' he is king whose coin passes current.' The mere fact of the coin, with the image and superscription of the Roman Emperor, being in use showed that they owed him that allegiance which would make it right for them to pay the tribute-money. But our LORD, in His reply, not only silenced them—He taught a lesson of loyalty to GOD as well. There was that which they owed to their earthly king, and there was that which they owed to their heavenly King. They each bore the image and handwriting of GOD, and the tribute He expected was that they should acknowledge His messenger, and give themselves to Him.

Our LORD's words, ' Render to GOD the things that are GOD's,' are needed now as much or more than ever. There are many who tell us that if we do our duty towards our neighbour that

18 ¶ Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection ; and they asked him, saying,

19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave *his wife behind him*, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

20 Now there were seven brethren : and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed : and the third likewise.

22 And the seven had her, and left no seed : last of all the woman died also.

23 In the resurrection, therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them ? for the seven had her to wife.

24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God ?

25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage ; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

is all which is required. (Of course, rendering to the State what is due is only doing our duty to our neighbour on a larger scale.) It is somewhat the same as if anyone argued that if he did his duty towards his brothers and sisters, he has no need to trouble about duty towards his father. We may, indeed, show that we love GOD by loving our neighbour, but if we put the love of GOD *first*, we are bound to love our neighbour, for the greater includes the less. No one will do his duty to his neighbour any the worse for bearing in mind that the first duty is to GOD. Experience will soon prove that, as a rule, those who most strongly insist on their duty to GOD are the very ones who endeavour to carry out most practically and lovingly their duty to their neighbour.

In the Church Catechism the twofold duty is clearly expressed. It may be added that in this part of the Catechism (as, indeed, in every other) the language is either Scriptural or based on the words of Scripture.

18. Sadducees. A religious party of the Jews. The Pharisees held that there was a law handed down by their teachers (Rabbis) besides the Mosaic law in the Scriptures ; this was the oral or traditional law. The Sadducees denied that this law was binding on them, and considered that the written law of Moses was alone of Divine authority. As there was no plain statement about the resurrection by Moses, they disbelieved in that doctrine. It is interesting to note that the Sadducees disappear from history after the first century. When Jerusalem was destroyed, and every pious Jew was filled with dismay and terror, it was only natural that the doctrine of the resurrection was a rock to which each clung with the greatest tenacity. That party which refused to accept this teaching dwindled away altogether.

19. See Deut. 25. 5, 6. The reason for this arrangement was to prevent any family from being blotted out of Israel.

24. Translate : ' Is it not for this cause that ye err, since ye know not the Scriptures, nor even the power of God ? '

25. As the angels. The sexual passion and the sexual relation arise owing to our earthly constitution. ' They two shall be one

26 And as touching the dead, that they rise : have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ?

27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living : ye therefore do greatly err.

28 ¶ And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all ?

29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel ; The Lord our God is one Lord :

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength : this *is* the first commandment.

31 And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

flesh. The union is as close as possible in this life, but the individuality will be free in the spiritual world.

Our LORD's words tell us more of the next life than has ever been revealed. If we study all that can be learned about the angels, we shall know what 'heaven,' or the heavenly state, is like. This clears up many popular but incorrect ideas of heaven. Rest in heaven does not mean idleness ; we shall each have occupation, but *no toil*. Our body will not cramp and limit us, but will be a fit and obedient vehicle for a free and noble life. We shall find an eternal happiness in looking into the things of God. The angels sang for joy at the birth of this world, and desired to look into the wonders of man's history ; therefore our lot will be analogous. The angels act as guardians to this race ; surely our life here is fitting us to be guardian angels to other races. Angels obey perfectly ; and, in happy obedience, are more and more in touch with God. So it will ever be with us. These, and many other thoughts which seem a fair inference from our LORD's words, picture the next world as full of delightful and wonderful experiences.

27. The God of the living. They had tried to entangle our LORD by a reference to the enactment of Moses about the marriage of a brother-in-law ; our LORD therefore confutes them out of the Book of Moses (Exod. 3. 6). If Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had passed into nothingness, it would be a mockery to call God 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' This title which God took was an assurance of the continuity of life beyond the grave.

28. Which is the first commandment ? The Jewish Rabbis taught that there were important distinctions between the commandments ; and, probably, the scribe who asked the question thought our LORD would give an answer which must offend one or other of their parties.

30, 31. These two commandments sum up the whole duty of man. One and the same principle underlies them both—love. Religion tells us our duty to God, morality our duty to man. Religion and morality are based on God Himself, for 'God is love.'

32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth : for there is one God ; and there is none other but he :

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*.

35 ¶ And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David ?

36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37 David therefore himself calleth him LORD ; and whence is he *then* his son ? And the common people heard him gladly.

38 ¶ And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and *love* salutations in the market places,

39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts :

34. Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. One who had so far advanced in understanding as to know that love was greater than sacrifice (for the principle underlying sacrifice was love) was very near CHRIST, and wanted but little to become a disciple.

36. The passage referred to is in Ps. 110, which was recognised as applying to the Messiah. In the original Psalm there are two different words for 'LORD.' The translation is : 'Jehovah said unto Adonai'—that is, 'GOD, the Eternal, said unto my LORD, the Messiah.'

37. Whence is he . . . his son ? The Messiah was to be a descendant of David ; it was a strange thing, therefore, for David to call his descendant by such a title of honour as 'LORD.' Children, or descendants, might call their parent or ancestor by an unusually honourable title ; but what was the meaning of such a departure as for David to call his son 'LORD' ? There was only one answer : David, by the HOLY GHOST, foresaw that the Messiah was not only human, but Divine ; hence he called Him 'LORD.' But this was the very answer which the Pharisees refused to give.

Common people. 'The great multitude.'

38. Long clothing. Two distinctive features of a Jew's dress were the phylacteries (frontlets) and the tassels. The phylactery was a tiny calf-skin box, with a portion of Scripture written on parchment inside it. There were two of them, containing four passages of Holy Writ—viz., Exod. 13. 2-10, 11-17 ; Deut. 6. 4-9, 13-23. One phylactery was bound on the left arm, and the other round the forehead.

The tassels were to remind them they were God's people, and must obey His commandments (Num. 15. 38, 39, 40). Those Jews who made extra pretension to piety would wear their phylacteries of greater breadth than usual, and their tassels longer, and a more flowing robe to show them off.

Salutations. The titles of honour—'Rabbi,' etc.

40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers : these shall receive greater damnation.

41 ¶ And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury : and many that were rich cast in much.

42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

43 And he called *unto him* his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury :

44 For all *they* did cast in of their abundance ; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living.

CHAPTER 13

AND as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here !*

2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings ? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

39. Uppermost rooms. Literally, 'chief places.' They reclined on couches at their meals. The arrangement was in shape somewhat like a horseshoe ; the open end allowed the attendants to wait upon the party. The chief place was the middle position at the top.

40. Greater damnation. 'More abundant judgment' is the exact rendering.

41. The treasury. Thirteen chests with large mouths stood in the outer court of the Temple, called the 'Court of the Women,' which, however, was open to all the people. Four of these were for the reception of free-will offerings for wood, incense, Temple decoration, etc.

42. Two mites. The word means the smallest copper coin. Two of them would be worth about three farthings of our money. *One lepton*, or 'mite,' was not received as an offering.

44. All that she had. A very common expression now heard is, 'I will give my mite'; but unless the giver offer *all that he has*, there is no comparison, and the quotation is quite inappropriate.

1. Stones. Most of them were $37\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, 12 feet high, and 18 feet broad ; some were even bigger.

2. This was literally fulfilled at the siege of Jerusalem, less than forty years after these words were spoken. So thorough was the work of destruction that the whole place was levelled to the ground, and no one would have thought any buildings had ever been there.

3. The Temple lay spread out before them in all its glorious beauty. The structure was of white marble, and many parts

4 Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what *shall be* the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled ?

5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any *man* deceive you :

6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ* ; and shall deceive many.

7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled : for *such things* must needs be ; but the end *shall not be* yet.

8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles : these *are* the beginnings of sorrows.

9 ¶ But take heed to yourselves : for they shall deliver you up to councils ; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten : and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

were overlaid with gold. It was like a dazzling dream of snow-hills lightened with bright sunbeams. As they gazed at it, it was only natural that the question should be put, ' When shall these things be ? '

NOTE.—Our LORD's reply to the Apostles (compare St. Matt. 24) refers to two events : (1) His coming to judgment, as fulfilled in the siege of Jerusalem, A.D. 70 ; (2) the coming of our LORD at the end of the world. Some of the events predicted usher in both of these comings (advents) ; some refer to one, and some refer to the other. The final advent, which we await, will be when all things are ready ; it is not a question so much of a *date* as of a development. The unrolling of the book of history depends in a great measure on man's will ; it is, therefore, much more to the point to consider signs of His coming rather than to treat revelation as if it were a problem in arithmetic from which a special date can clearly be obtained.

5. Take heed lest any man deceive you. They were to use their reason. GOD gave man reason, and intended he should use it in religious matters as in everything else. Many would come and say they were the Messiah, but they must not be led away by these pretenders. These false Christs would try and found their spurious Messianic kingdom by force of arms ; then would be wars and rumours of wars—they might expect it.

7, 8. These events occurred before the siege of Jerusalem, as we gather from Tacitus, the Roman historian. They will happen on a larger scale before the end of the world.

8. Sorrows. Literally, ' birth-pangs.' The expression conveys the idea of a new age about to be born midst the throes of suffering humanity.

9. Deliver you up to councils. Within only a few weeks the Apostles were brought before the great Jewish council, the Sanhedrin (Acts 4. 3).

Ye shall be beaten. St. Paul (2 Cor. 11. 24, 25) was beaten eight times.

For a testimony against them. This should be ' for a testimony unto them.' They would bear witness for CHRIST, as St. Paul did before Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and the Roman Emperor.

10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

11 But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand, what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate : but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye : for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son ; and children shall rise up against *their* parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

13 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake : but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 ¶ But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judæa flee to the mountains :

15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter *therein*, to take any thing out of his house :

10. Before the siege of Jerusalem the Gospel had been preached throughout the Roman Empire. Before the end of the world it will be preached throughout the whole earth. It has already been published in over 350 languages. The British and Foreign Bible Society have circulated nearly 200 million copies of Scripture, in languages spoken by three-quarters of the population of the world.

11. **Take no thought beforehand.** Literally, 'Be not anxious beforehand.' The words 'neither do ye premeditate' are wanting in some MSS.

13. There were dozens of heathen religions which were allowed by Rome ; and Christianity would also have been licensed but for one thing : the Christian refused to have anything to do with heathenism at all. Most heathen religions not only permitted immorality, but even made it a part of their worship. Idolatry was also a prevailing feature of these religions. The Christian could not possibly take any part in immoral or idolatrous practices ; he would cease to be a follower of CHRIST if he did. Consequently, the contending parties were Christians against all other religious bodies ; and so Christians were hated 'of all men for CHRIST'S name's sake.'

14. **Abomination of desolation.** Referred to in Dan. 9. 27. What the expression exactly means cannot be said with absolute certainty. St. Mark calls special attention to this sign by the words, 'let him that readeth understand.' Christians who were in Judæa evidently knew what was pointed at, for they fled to Pella, a town of Peræa, about a hundred miles off, and so escaped the horrors of the siege. The abomination of desolation may refer to either of the following : (1) The Roman standards rising over the site of the Temple ; (2) the abominations practised by a party of Jews called Zealots, who polluted the Temple.

15, 16. There was to be no delay in their flight. They were to make their way down from the house by the outside staircase ; or, if working in the field, they were not even to wait to pick up their outer garment, which they would have thrown aside while engaged in their task.

16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days !

18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

19 For *in* those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved : but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here *is* Christ ; or, lo, *he is* there ; believe *him* not :

22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if *it were* possible, even the elect.

23 But take ye heed : behold, I have foretold you all things.

24 ¶ But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.

25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree ; When her branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near :

29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, *even* at the doors.

19. Josephus, a Jew who was born about A.D. 37, and who lived until some time after the siege of Jerusalem, gives a history of those times. His description of the destruction of Jerusalem and the horrors of the siege show that our LORD's words were fulfilled to the letter. Owing to the divisions among the Jews themselves and their lack of leadership, the city fell in less than five months. But the famine was so great that the besieged devoured filth of the streets, and mothers ate their own children. Thousands of Jews were crucified by the Romans before the walls in sight of their own relatives. Altogether, over a million persons are said to have perished during the war.

20. **Elect.** The word means 'chosen.' The literal translation is, 'but for the chosen whom He hath chosen.' Those referred to were CHRIST's disciples, chosen out of the world. All members of the Church are the 'elect.'

24, 25. **In those days, etc.** Our LORD refers now to His second coming, and uses the symbolism employed by Isaiah (see Isa. 13. 9, 10). Sun, moon, stars, and heavenly powers in general are symbolical of rulers. The idea conveyed in verses 24 and 25 seems to be that of confusion, revolution, and anarchy preceding the second advent.

28. **Now learn a parable of the fig-tree.** Literally, 'Now from the fig tree learn her parable.'

29. **It is nigh.** Instead of 'it,' read 'He'—*i.e.*, the Son of man.

30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.

31 Heaven and earth shall pass away : but my words shall not pass away.

32 ¶ But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

33 Take ye heed, watch and pray : for ye know not when the time is.

34 *For the Son of man* is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

35 Watch ye therefore : for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow, or in the morning :

36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

CHAPTER 14

AFTER two days was *the feast of* the passover, and of unleavened bread : and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put *him* to death.

2 But they said, Not on the feast *day*, lest there be an uproar of the people.

3 ¶ And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and she brake the box, and poured *it* on his head.

30. This generation shall not pass. As regards the coming to judgment in the case of the siege of Jerusalem, the generation was that to which our LORD spake. As regards the second coming of the Son of man, the generation would be the whole race of mankind.

31. Even from a scientific point of view alone, it is true that the 'heaven and earth shall pass away.' The description given in 2 Pet. 3. 10 is that 'the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat : the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.' Whether the earth and the other planets will in the end fall into the sun, or whether there will be a collision between our solar system and some other system or gigantic orb, no one knows ; but either view is probable, and would fulfil the words of St. Peter. But although 'heaven and earth shall pass away,' our LORD's words are eternal truths, and remain for ever.

32. The Apostles wished to know the time when these things should be. But our LORD, whether as Son of man or as the Word revealing truths of GOD, could not say. GOD alone knew.

33. It is a merciful providence that we do not know when the time is, but we must prepare, nevertheless, by watching and praying.

34. The translation should be : 'It is as when a man, absent from his people, having left his house.'

4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made ?

5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

14, 15. The chronology (arrangement of time) of the week of the crucifixion of our LORD is probably as follows :

Chief Events.

First day of the week

(Palm Sunday)

.. CHRIST's entry into Jerusalem. At night He returns to Bethany.

Second day of the week .. Cleansing of the Temple. He again returns to Bethany.

Third day of the week .. Our LORD teaches in the Temple. Questions of the Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, etc.

Fourth day of the week .. Rulers conspire to kill JESUS. Judas makes his bargain.

Fifth day of the week .. JESUS sends two disciples to make preparations for the Passover.

Sixth day of the week

(Good Friday) ..

.. (Notice that the Jews counted from one sunset to another as a day. The events of the sixth day begin at sunset of the fifth day.) Our LORD institutes the Holy Communion. His agony in Gethsemane. His betrayal. He is brought before the high-priest in the night. The chief priests and rulers take Him to Pilate. Pilate sends Him to Herod, who sends Him back to Pilate. Pilate seeks to release JESUS. Sentence of death. At the third hour (nine o'clock in the morning) the crucifixion. In the evening, the taking down of the body, and the burial.

NOTE.—St. Mark says : ' And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him ' (15. 25). St. John (19. 14) says, ' It was about the sixth hour ' when Pilate condemned our LORD. The actual crucifixion may have taken place about three hours after the words of condemnation were spoken. This would make the time the ninth hour, according to the fourth Gospel. St. John, who wrote thirty or forty years after St. Mark, and while an exile in a foreign land, most probably used a method of reckoning similar to our own.

Seventh day of the week .. The guard watching over the tomb.

1. See note on verse 12.

3. **Bethany.** A village about a mile to the east of the summit of the Mount of Olives, and not two miles from Jerusalem.

6 And Jesus said, Let her alone ; why trouble ye her ? she hath wrought a good work on me.

7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good : but me ye have not always.

Simon the leper. He was now in all probability no longer a leper, having been cured by our LORD. It is thought that he was a relative of Martha and Mary.

A woman. Mary, the sister of Lazarus, full of gratitude for the restoration to life of her brother Lazarus. (St. John, 12. 3).

An alabaster box, etc. The literal translation is, 'an alabastron of ointment of pistic nard, very costly.' The alabastron was a flask made of stone got from Alabastron, in Egypt. The pistic nard was pure or genuine nard obtained from an Indian plant.

Poured it on His head. From St. John 12. 3, we find that Mary also anointed His feet, and dried them with the hair of her head. An honoured guest was sometimes anointed on the head, but it was very unusual, or even unique, to anoint the feet.

4. Why was this waste ? In St. John 12. 4 we see that the murmuring began with Judas Iscariot. He was the treasurer of the apostolic band, and if the ointment had been sold, the price would doubtless have been handed over to his care ; this was what he would have much liked, as he was accustomed to pilfer from the contents of the treasure-box or bag (St. John 12. 6).

5. Three hundred pence. Money varies in its purchasing power : for example, the penny was the day's wage for a labourer. If we calculate 2s. 6d. as the day's wage now, the value of the ointment was three hundred half-crowns, which is £37 10s. (The penny of our LORD's time was the 'denarius,' in value about 7½d. of our money ; in '£ s. d.' the 'd.' stands for 'denarius.')

6, 7. The word translated 'good' means 'beautiful.' Mary had done a graceful, beautiful act. It is interesting to observe how objections repeat themselves. Some of the murmurers were quite honest (not like Judas) in their indignation, and were really mindful of the poor. When large sums are spent in church building and decoration nowadays, there are those who murmur in the same way. 'Why build cathedrals, and pay large sums for ornament and music and so on, when there are the poor to be considered ?' The retort may well be made : 'Why have *any* fine buildings, or *any* ornament or works of art, whether in our homes or in our public edifices, seeing that the money devoted to these objects might be given to the poor ?' If we are going to do away with every beautiful work until all the poor are relieved from their poverty, we ought surely to begin our self-denial at home, and not in GOD's house. But there is no need for a distorted view of our duty ; we must aim at a proper balance in these matters. There is our duty to the poor, and there is our duty to GOD. A thankful, loving heart will guide each to make offerings of right proportion to GOD and to CHRIST's poor.

8 She hath done what she could : she is come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

10 ¶ And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.

11 And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

12 ¶ And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover ?

8. To anoint My body to the burying. This is a reference to the custom of using ointments, etc., for embalming the body for the grave. Our LORD knows what must shortly come to pass on Calvary, and speaks of the anointing as an anticipation of His own burial.

9. Every time this loving, graceful act of Mary is told, there is a fulfilment of this prediction. Nearly nineteen centuries have passed since the words were uttered, and still the simple story is spread throughout God's world.

10. One of the twelve. In the original '*the* one of the twelve,'—*i.e.*, the traitor.

11. He sought, etc. The Jewish rulers did not wish to take JESUS publicly, so they were glad to pay the traitor the thirty pieces of silver (the price of a slave, Exod. 21. 32), a sum equal in purchasing power to £15; to lead them where they might carry off the Nazarene without tumult. It may well be asked, What were the motives which led to such treachery? But they are not far to seek. Judas, like the others, was taken up with the idea that the Messiah's kingdom was to be of an earthly character. Possibly he hoped to receive the post of High Treasurer, and he longed for the time to come when JESUS would strike a blow at Rome, and proclaim this long-expected Messianic kingdom. But our LORD's words showed him that he was mistaken, and finally the incident of the anointing at Bethany, and the reference to burial, filled him with rage, and led him to despair of any worldly prosperity by following JESUS. There were probably other motives, for we seldom take any important step for one motive alone. Judas may have perceived that his thefts from the treasure-box were known to JESUS, and dreaded being called to account. It has also been suggested that he wanted to provoke a decisive conflict between the rulers and JESUS, in the hope that it would impel Him to resort to force and to raise the standard of revolt. Whatever the motives were, the unhappy wretch was afterwards filled with an overwhelming remorse, and hanged himself. From Acts 1. 18, it would seem that the branch to which he had attached the noose gave way, and, 'falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.'

12. The Passover. This great festival was to commemorate the day when the angel of death passed over the houses where he

13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water : follow him.

14 And whosoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples ?

15 And he will shew you a large upper room furnished *and* prepared : there make ready for us.

saw the blood sprinkled ; the first-born in all other houses were slain. In Exod. 12. 13 we read : ' And when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.' At the time of our LORD the Passover was celebrated as follows :

A male lamb without blemish was taken by the head of the family, or any other person who was not ceremonially unclean (2 Chron. 30. 17), into the court of the Temple. The lamb was killed by this person, or a servant, and the priests caught the blood and poured it out at the foot of the great altar. The tail, fat, kidneys, and liver were set apart for the altar ; the rest was carried home towards evening.

At the Passover meal the family gathered round the board with the master of the house, or the most honoured guest, as president or celebrant. With the Passover there were eaten flat cakes of unleavened bread, to remind them that they left Egypt in such haste that there was no time to leaven the dough ; they also partook of bitter herbs, and a sauce called Charoseth. The order of the feast was regulated by the drinking of four cups of wine, always mixed with water. The method was :

(1) Celebrant takes one of the cups, blesses, tastes, and passes it round.

(2) Water brought in, and all rinse their hands.

(3) Celebrant blesses and takes a portion of the herbs, eats a piece, and the rest follow his example.

(4) The celebrant narrates the story of the deliverance from Egypt (Exod. 12. 27 and 13. 8).

(5) Second cup of wine filled. A child or proselyte (one converted to Judaism) inquires, ' What mean ye by this feast ?' To this a reply is given in a set form. Psalms 113, 114 are sung. Second cup is drunk.

(6) Celebrant takes two unleavened cakes, breaks one, and blesses and distributes a portion to each.

(7) The lamb eaten. Third cup of wine.

(8) Thanksgiving, and a fourth cup of wine. Psalms 115-118 sung.

(9) The Great Hallel (Psalms 135, 136).

13. A man bearing a pitcher. As a rule, women used to carry water in the East ; they would therefore be able easily to distinguish the person of whom our LORD had told them.

14, 15. The festival was a time of universal hospitality. Probably the master of the house was expecting our LORD.

16 And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them : and they made ready the passover.

17 And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

18 And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.

19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, *Is it I ?* and another *said, Is it I ?*

20 And he answered and said unto them, *It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.*

21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him : but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

22 ¶ And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake *it*, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat : this is my body.

16. There is a great difficulty connected with the accounts of the Last Supper. Was it the Passover supper which was being held at the same time by all other Jews ? From St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke we should infer that this was the case, and that CHRIST was crucified on the *day after* the sacrifice of the lamb. This would not prevent His death being the fulfilment of the type afforded by the Passover. He is the true Paschal Lamb.

Or was the Supper a supper like the Passover, and intended by our LORD to represent it, *for Himself and His disciples*, but eaten the *day before* the real Passover ? From the account given by St. John, we should infer that this was the case. If so, our LORD died at the time of the sacrifice of the Passover lamb.

The greatest scholars are divided between these two views ; it is hardly necessary, therefore, to say that we do not pretend to decide which is correct. It is, however, important to remember that we must not assume that the Evangelists (writers of the Gospels) contradict one another. We do not know enough of the customs of the Jews to be quite sure that we understand *all* the expressions used in the Gospels. The following are the references : St. Matt. 26. 17-19 ; St. Mark 14. 12-16 ; St. Luke 22. 7-15 ; St. John 13. 1, 29 ; 18. 28 ; 19. 14, 31. (It should be noted that the Church commemorates the crucifixion the day *before* the feast-day.)

21. **As it is written** (see Isa. 53). Notice that our LORD recognises in His life and death the fulfilment of Scriptural prophecy.

Good were it for that man, etc. The Greek would bear the translation : ' Good were it for him (the Son of man) if that man had never been born.' But the expression seems to be one used by the Rabbis to signify the extreme misery into which anyone might be plunged. A somewhat similar saying is sometimes used nowadays : ' It made him wish he had never been born.'

22-24. We have here a shortened account of the institution of the Holy Communion. The other accounts are given in St. Matt. 26. 26-28 ; St. Luke 22. 19, 20 ; and 1 Cor. 11. 23-25. During the Last Supper bread and wine were handed round in accordance with the usual custom of the Passover. But our

23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave *it* to them : and they all drank of it. .

24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

LORD gives a new meaning to these acts, and varies the customary words used by the celebrant. If we put the different accounts together, our LORD said : ' Take, eat : this is My body, which is being given on your behalf. This do (or offer) as a memorial of Me.' Then He took the cup and said : ' This is My blood of the new covenant, which is being shed on behalf of many for remission of sins. Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, as a memorial of Me.'

Three observations on the translation may be made : (1) The word translated ' do ' is frequently translated ' offer ' in the Greek version of the Old Testament. (2) ' Given on your behalf ' is the accurate translation. There are two prepositions in Greek which mean ' for ' : one means ' given for you ' in the sense of ' *instead of you* ' ; the other preposition means ' for ' in the sense of ' *on your behalf* . ' It is the *latter* preposition which our LORD uses, and it is important to notice that whenever it says ' CHRIST died for us, ' the preposition used is the same—*i.e.*, ' CHRIST died *on our behalf* . ' (3) ' Many ' here means ' all. '

The following comments refer to the accounts taken together :

(1) The Passover was a festival commemorating God's covenant with His people : when the angel of death saw the blood of the lamb, he passed over. The bread broken and the wine outpoured in the LORD's Supper represent CHRIST's body on the cross and the blood outpoured from His side when pierced (broken into) by the spear. We are saved from eternal death by His blood.

(2) The efficacy of the Passover offering, the blood of the lamb poured out at the altar, consisted in its being a type of the one only true sacrifice—the offering of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Although only typical, this was called a sacrifice. The breaking of bread and pouring out of wine represent the death of CHRIST on the cross, and a representation of that one only true sacrifice may well be called a sacrifice itself—certainly we have a good precedent for doing so, seeing that the typical offering of the Passover was so called.

(3) The LORD's Supper is a memorial rite. Every time we partake we put GOD in mind of the one only true sacrifice, and plead that sacrifice as an offering on our behalf.

(4) This rite is called Holy Communion (' Communion ' means ' fellowship ' or ' participation of ') because it is a bond of union between CHRIST and us, and therefore between Christians themselves. A feast was always considered as constituting a tie between the guests and the giver of the feast. It is so in the LORD's Supper.

(5) It is called ' Eucharist ' because it is our great thanksgiving service (' Eucharist ' means ' thanksgiving ').

25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

26 ¶ And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

27 And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night : for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

(6) The Apostles and the early Church at first 'broke bread' every day (Acts 2. 42). From Acts 20. 7, we see the custom settled down into a weekly observance on the 'first day of the week.' The special reason for Christians meeting together was for the LORD's Supper. A very early writer, Justin Martyr (A.D. 139), tells us that the custom was to meet together on Sundays for the 'Eucharist,' and the order of the service as then used is carried out in much the same way in our Holy Communion Office in the Prayer Book.

(7) Our LORD uses the expression '*as oft as ye shall drink it.*' The Apostles and the earliest Christians treated the LORD's Supper as *the* service for Sunday, and took it that this commemoration was to become a regular custom. There can be no doubt, therefore, that until our LORD comes again all His followers must continue to celebrate this holy rite. Also, no one who pretends to follow CHRIST has the slightest excuse for disobedience to Him in the matter of this plain command, 'This do.'

(8) CHRIST promised that when 'two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst' (St. Matt. 18. 20). He is spiritually present in our congregations. He is, therefore, certainly spiritually present in the Holy Communion, seeing that it is a bond of union between us and Him. Spirit is real. If there were a comparison between a spiritual presence and a carnal (fleshly) presence, we must own that the spiritual is the *more real*. The flesh changes, decays, passes away. The spiritual is permanent. Consequently, if our LORD is spiritually present, He is *really* present in the Holy Communion. Hence, there ought not to be any objection to use the expression 'Real Presence' when referring to our LORD's presence in the Holy Communion. In these days the tendency is to look upon earthly, fleshly things as realities, and spiritual things as formless, shadowy, unreal. We require to emphasise the fact that the spiritual is the real.

25. The reference seems to be to the new life which CHRIST would partake of with His Church after the day of Pentecost (see Chapter 2, verse 22).

26. **An hymn.** Probably Psalms 115-118, or Psalms 135, 136.

Mount of Olives. A hill, about three hundred feet higher than the Temple mount, to the east of Jerusalem, and about a mile away, although nearer in one part of it.

27. **It is written**—Zech. 13. 7.

29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet *will* not I.

30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, *even* in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

32 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane : and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy ;

34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death : tarry ye here, and watch.

35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things *are* possible unto thee ; take away this cup from me : nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou ? couldest not thou watch one hour ?

38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly *is* ready, but the flesh *is* weak.

32. Gethsemane. At the foot of the Mount of Olives, and about one-half or three-quarters of a mile from the walls of Jerusalem. There was a garden here, or orchard, and the shade of the trees made it an attractive spot.

33. Very heavy. The word in the original means ' to be utterly depressed with sorrow.'

34. Tarry—' wait.'

36. Abba. The actual word used by our LORD ; it means ' Father.'

Not what I will, etc. In this supreme moment of His agony the prayer which falls from His lips is but an echo of His whole life—God's will first. He had taught us to pray, ' Thy will be done,' and this was His own prayer even when His soul so shrank from what was before Him that ' His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground ' (St. Luke 22. 44).

37. Peter had just vowed he was willing to die with JESUS, but when he was asked such a simple thing as to ' watch one hour ' he miserably failed. How true to human nature ! We vow we can do great things for our LORD, but as a rule He only asks simple duties—the daily routine and the ' common task,' a little watchfulness and sympathy—but how we fail ! It is no good protesting our willingness to endure the great trials unless we show our capacity by gladly bearing the simple burdens.

38. The spirit is ready, etc. This was about the only time our LORD had asked a favour (if it may be so called) from His followers, and they failed to respond. But out of His deep sympathy He finds an excuse for them. Notice, however, that the excuse is a statement of a *fact*, and also that our LORD shows the way which would have rendered excuse unnecessary—' Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.'

39 And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.

40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.

41 And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest : it is enough, the hour is come ; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

42 Rise up, let us go ; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

43 ¶ And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

44 And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he ; take him, and lead *him* away safely.

45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master ; and kissed him.

46 ¶ And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

47 And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

39. Spake the same words. A frequent reproach levelled at the Prayer Book is that there is repetition of the same words in our services. Here we have a very good precedent for it. We are certainly forbidden 'vain repetitions,' as if prayer were an incantation, a sort of magical phrase to work wonders ; but the earnest 'saying the same words' is a very different thing.

40. Wist—knew.

41. Sleep on now. The LORD had trodden 'the winepress alone,' and 'of the people there was none with Him' (Isa. 63. 3). Their watching now was no longer needed.

41, 42. The latter part of verse 41 was probably said when our LORD saw the torches of the soldiers in the distance across the valley. 'Rise up,' etc., was said as Judas with the multitude came to the garden.

44. Lead Him away safely. Probably Judas feared some manifestation of the superhuman power of JESUS, and was anxious that He should be securely taken. His conscience made him a coward.

45. Kissed Him. The original word means 'kissed Him with fervour.' A 'Judas kiss' is now proverbial for treachery.

47. One of them. From St. John 18. 10, we know it was Peter. We might almost have guessed this, even if history had been silent. It was just what might have been expected from a man of his impetuous temper. It is very interesting to notice that the name is not mentioned in any of the Gospels except St. John's. Why is this ? The reasonable inference is that when the first three Gospels were produced, Peter was alive, and it was not desirable to make public that he had cut off the ear of a servant of the high-priest, lest it might bring down upon him the special enmity of those who were foes to Christianity. When St. John wrote his Gospel, Peter was dead, consequently there was no need to keep silence about the name. We learn from St. Luke 22. 50 and 51, that it was the right ear which was cut off (a detail which St. Luke 'the physician' very naturally gives), and our LORD immediately restored it.

48 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and *with* staves to take me ?

49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not : but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

50 And they all forsook him, and fled

51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about *his* naked *body* ; and the young men laid hold on him :

52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

53 ¶ And they led Jesus away to the high priest : and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest : and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.

55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death ; and found none.

56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.

57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,

58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.

59 But neither so did their witness agree together.

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing ? what *is it which* these witness against thee ?

51. Certain young man. We do not know who he was ; neither, at first, does there seem any reason for introducing this incident. But if we suppose it to have been the writer himself, St. Mark, it was very natural for him to mention the circumstance. This, also, would account for the many minute details given of the scene, as if by an eyewitness.

52. Naked. With only the under-robe on.

53. High-priest. From St. John 18. 12, we see that our LORD was first brought before Annas, who had been high-priest some years previously, and who was father-in-law to Caiaphas, the high-priest mentioned in this verse. Possibly, JESUS was brought before Annas first, because they thought he would be sure to condemn, and that would influence his son-in-law to follow his lead. Annas may have occupied rooms in the official residence of Caiaphas.

54. The palace. This should be 'courtyard.' This was an open space in the centre of the palace.

58. I will destroy this temple, etc. The word for 'temple' means the inner sanctuary—the part which was especially honoured by the presence of GOD. This charge was a garbled rendering of the words : 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (St. John 2. 19), the explanation of which was that our LORD spoke of the temple of His body (St. John 2. 21). St. Paul also uses the expression in a somewhat similar way : 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of GOD, and that the SPIRIT of GOD dwelleth in you ?' (1 Cor. 3. 16). These lying witnesses tried to make out that JESUS had threatened the Temple (the building) with destruction, and so dishonoured GOD.

61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed ?

62 And Jesus said, I am : and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses ?

64 Ye have heard the blasphemy : what think ye ? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy : and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

66 ¶ And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest :

67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.

68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch ; and the cock crew.

69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is *one* of them.

70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art *one* of them : for thou art a Galilæan, and thy speech agreeth *thereto*.

71 But he began to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

62. I am. Our LORD had silently claimed that He was the Messiah by His miracles, and by His permitting the people to shout their 'Hosannas'; now in the plainest language He declares His Messiahship (compare His words with Dan. 7. 13, 14).

63. Rent his clothes. Under great emotion this seems to have been a common custom. The origin may have been quite a natural one ; there is a feeling of suffocation when one is deeply shocked, and in the effort to obtain relief it would be quite in keeping with the passionate, quick Eastern character to tear off the garments which impeded breathing. In course of time, rending the garments would become a recognised expression of deep emotion.

64. Guilty of death—'liable to death.' Blasphemy, according to the law of Moses, was punishable by stoning to death (Lev. 24. 16).

67. Warming himself. The nights are frequently very cold in Palestine.

68. At first Peter tries to evade the question by pretending not to understand what the maid meant by her remark. He does not utterly deny his LORD ; he simply endeavours to avoid the matter. But he goes out into the porch to get away from inquisitive looks.

70. This time he denies 'with an oath' (St. Matt. 26. 72) that he knows JESUS. But his rough Galilæan speech, so different from the native of Jerusalem, betrayed that he was, at all events, a fellow-countryman of JESUS, so 'they that stood by' accused him again.

72 And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

CHAPTER 15

AND straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried *him* away, and delivered *him* to Pilate.

2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest *it*.

71. Finally he plunges into deeper guilt, and says, 'May I be cursed if I know Him,' and furthermore takes an oath that he does not know Him. From St. Luke 22. 61, we see that our LORD now turned, and right across the courtyard His pitying and reproachful eye looked upon Peter. The sound of the cock-crow and the look of his LORD brought him to a right mind, and he 'wept bitterly.' A few weeks afterwards, by his preaching on the day of Pentecost, he showed that these were no idle tears of remorse, but they indicated that repentance which leads to the forsaking of sin. Henceforth, right up to the time of his death by martyrdom, as far as his LORD was concerned, Peter was truly the rock-man—firm in his loyalty to JESUS CHRIST. (The Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke inform us that Peter 'wept bitterly'; St. Mark leaves out 'bitterly.' It is very natural that there should be this omission, as St. Mark wrote under the guidance of Peter: the Apostle would not be so likely to point out the violence of his grief as another would.)

1. Pilate. The Roman governor. It was the custom of the governor to reside at the official residence in Herod's palace during the great festivals, to preserve order. The position of the English resident, or governor, and the native princes of India will give some idea of the relation between the Roman governor and Herod. It is important to remember that Pilate, as soon as he knew that it was a case of religious feud, had no wish to condemn JESUS. He took the following steps to avoid the crucifixion:

(1) He told Caiaphas, or the counsel who represented the Jewish rulers, that, as it was a religious question, they had better judge Him according to their own law.

(2) When He heard JESUS was from Galilee, he sent the case to Herod Antipas, in whose province Galilee lay.

(3) He tried to prevail on the people to ask that JESUS might be released at the feast.

(4) He pronounced Him innocent, and washed his hands of the matter.

(5) He had Him scourged, hoping that this terrible punishment might move them from asking for the crucifixion.

3 And the chief priests accused him of many things : but he answered nothing.

4 And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing ? behold how many things they witness against thee.

5 But Jesus yet answered nothing ; so that Pilate marvelled.

6 Now at *that* feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

7 And there was *one* named Barabbas, *which lay* bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire *him to do as he* had ever done unto them.

9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews ?

It may well be asked, What caused him to yield in the end ? It was anxiety for his own position. The cry was raised, ' If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend : whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.' The Cæsar, the Roman Emperor Tiberius, was the most suspicious of monsters, and Pilate feared that if the matter came to his ears, he would be recalled to Rome and lose his post. In order, therefore, to run no risk from the charge of having overlooked treason against Cæsar, he gave permission for the crucifixion of JESUS. His injustice, however, did not save him for long from the fate he dreaded. About three years afterwards he slew a number of Samaritans without sufficient cause to warrant such extreme measures. He was sent to Rome to answer the accusations made against him, and lost his governorship. The manner of his death is uncertain. One tradition is that he plunged into a dismal lake on Mount Pilatus, near Lucerne, and so the last wretched years of his existence ended in the still more wretched and awful fate of suicide.

2. Art Thou the King of the Jews ? The word 'Thou' is very emphatic in the original. Pilate was astonished that one like JESUS could make such a pretension.

Thou sayest it. This is equal to 'What you say is true.' Although 'meek and lowly,' our LORD never shrank from the loftiest claims, and when the circumstances required it, He spake most clearly on the subject of His personality and office.

3. He answered nothing. When accusations spring from envy, hatred, and prejudice, and when truth and lies are inextricably blended in the charge, there is only one answer—viz., silence.

6. It is common with many nations to mark the time of any great public festival by releasing prisoners. It was a custom at this feast of the Passover, and Pilate seizes the opportunity to try and release JESUS.

7. Barabbas. 'A robber,' but not of the ordinary type. He had joined in some petty rising, and taken part in a skirmish, during which, probably, some soldiers had been killed.

9. The King of the Jews. Pilate half hoped that the title would appeal to the people on behalf of JESUS, who claimed it.

- 10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.
 11 But the chief priests moved the people that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.
 12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do *unto him* whom ye call the King of the Jews?
 13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.
 14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.
 15 ¶ And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged *him*, to be crucified.
 16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Prætorium and they call together the whole band.
 17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his *head*,
 18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!
 19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing *their* knees worshipped him.
 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.
 21 And they compelled one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear *his* cross.

10. For envy. The Romans had a keen sense of justice; it was this which helped them to become the greatest colonising power of those times. The Roman governor, therefore, saw through the chief priests, and easily read their real motives.

11. Barabbas had been condemned for rising against the Roman authority; this made him popular, for the people hated the Roman yoke.

15. Scourged Him. This was a frightful punishment, sometimes causing death. The scourge consisted of several thongs which were knotted with pieces of metal or sharp pointed bones. It was after this horrible scourging that Pilate made one more effort to release JESUS by an appeal to their pity. 'Ecce Homo' (Behold the Man), he said, as JESUS stood before them with mangled body; but there was no softening their hard hearts, and nothing would content them but the extreme penalty of the law. (*Ecce* is pronounced *ek-se*. *Ecce homo* is Latin, the language of the Romans.)

16. Prætorium. A prætor was a Roman magistrate upon whom the governorship of a province was often conferred. His residence was the prætorium. Hence the word came to mean any governor's residence or palace.

17. With purple. In St. Matt. 27. 28, it says, 'a scarlet robe.' The word 'purple' here signifies a reddish-purple. In those days it was not customary to distinguish between colours so accurately as we do. Purple was the *royal* colour, and this robe was placed on our LORD in mockery.

A crown of thorns. Gathered close by, where they grow even to this day.

21. Compelled one Simon a Cyrenian. A Jew from Cyrene, in

22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh : but he received *it* not.

24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

North Africa. He may have been a disciple, or, at all events, shown some sympathy with JESUS. It was the custom for the criminal to bear the cross-pieces of the cross himself, but our LORD sank beneath this burden, and they compelled or impressed Simon for this office.

Alexander and Rufus. Evidently well known, to judge by the way St. Mark refers to them, and, most probably, alive at the time he writes. Rufus is supposed to be the same as the person mentioned in Rom. 16. 13.

22. Golgotha. A slight hill outside Jerusalem, shaped somewhat like a skull. 'Golgotha' (Hebrew) means the same as 'Calvary' (Latin)—*i.e.*, a skull.

23. Gave Him to drink, etc. The exact translation is : ' They were about to give Him.' The myrrh was a bitter drug which, together with the wine, would help to stupefy the faculties and enable the criminal to bear somewhat more easily the torture of the cross. This seems to be the only touch of humanity which was shown to our LORD.

He received it not. Our LORD wished to pass into the unseen world with a clear mind. Moreover, His last words were not yet spoken—some of His most tremendous utterances were to be made from the cross.

24. Crucified Him. The world's great tragedy. Whatever view we take, it is certain that our LORD would *not* have been crucified if men had not been sinners. Crucifixion was not a Jewish punishment : its origin seems to have been in Persia and Carthage. It was adopted by Alexander the Great, and then by Rome. The cross consisted of an upright post and two arms, or cross-pieces. The hands were nailed to the cross-pieces, and the feet to the post a foot or two above the ground. A large, rough pin afforded a miserable support or rest for the body, and so prevented the weight of the body from tearing the hands from the cross. The sufferer endured a slow, horrible death ; cramp pains seized him in every part, and a delirium of torture was passed through before death released him.

Parted His garments, etc. The soldiers, who were to watch to see that the body was not removed, cast lots for the clothes of the sufferers, as these garments were their perquisites. The outer garment of JESUS was divided amongst the four men who composed the watch. The inner garment would have been spoilt by tearing, so it was for this that they cast the lot (probably dice). Thus, unconsciously, they fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 22. 18 : ' They parted My garments among them, and for My vesture they cast lots.'

25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

26. It was the custom to bear before each criminal to the place of execution a whitened board, which had written on it in black letters his crime. This board was placed over him on the cross. In the case of our LORD this superscription was written in three languages. This accounts for the slightly different readings in the three Gospels which refer to it—viz., St. Matt. 27. 37, St. John 19. 19, and in this verse. The Hebrew (Aramaic) ran: 'JESUS of Nazareth, King of the Jews.' The Greek: 'This is JESUS, the King of the Jews.' The Latin: 'The King of the Jews.' The high-priest tried to get Pilate to alter the writing, and put, 'He said, I am King of the Jews' (St. John 19. 21). But Pilate replied: 'What I have written, I have written.' He knew that he had already given way too much to their demands, and if they felt insulted by the title, so much the more reason for leaving it untouched.

27. **Two thieves.** It should be 'two robbers.' They were probably men who had assisted at the same outbreak against Roman authority in which Barabbas had taken part. The people looked upon them as having much of the spirit of the Messiah whom they expected.

28. See Isa. 53. 12 for the Scripture referred to.

29. **Railed on Him.** Literally, 'were blaspheming Him.'

31. **He saved others; Himself He cannot save.** Their mocking taunt had an element of truth in it, although they little dreamed of it. JESUS CHRIST gave up His life to save mankind; in saving others He could not, morally speaking, save His own life. He had to drain the cup to the last bitter drop before He could say, 'It is finished.'

32. **They that were crucified with Him reviled Him.** The word translated 'reviled' means 'reproached.' The nature of the reproach is given in St. Luke 23. 39: 'If Thou be CHRIST, save Thyself and us.' But after a time one of them was struck by the majesty and dignity of the patient sufferer in the midst. He confessed that his own punishment was a just reward; but JESUS had done nothing amiss. Then from penitence he sprang

33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard *it*, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.

36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

to faith, and said: 'LORD, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.' To this striking expression of trust our LORD replied with a no less striking statement: 'Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise' (St. Luke 23. 43).

33. Darkness. The sixth hour to the ninth hour was just the time when the sun was at its full strength. The origin of the darkness is unknown. A beautiful legend poetically puts it that the darkness was caused by the myriads of angels who came to gaze on so awful a spectacle, and by their presence intercepted the light of the sun.

34. There were seven sayings from the cross:

(1) 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (St. Luke 23. 34).

(2) 'Woman, behold thy Son. . . Behold thy mother' (St. John 19. 26, 27).

(3) 'To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise' (St. Luke 23. 43).

(4) 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' (St. Mark 15. 34).

(5) 'I thirst' (St. John 19. 28).

(6) 'It is finished' (St. John 19. 30).

(7) 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit' (St. Luke 23. 46).

The fourth word, or saying, is a quotation from Ps. 22. 1, a psalm of David when in great distress: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' St. Mark gives the actual words and this interpretation. It is impossible to say in what way JESUS was forsaken of GOD. There is one thing which we may reverently remark: He was tasting the extreme penalty of sin, which is being forsaken of GOD, and this not for Himself, but for us.

35. He calleth Elias. Perhaps they only heard the first syllable of 'Eloi.' Or it may have been that they jeered at Him, and pretended that He was calling for Elias (Elijah), who was popularly supposed to come before the Messiah.

36. Sponge full of vinegar. The word for 'vinegar' means a cheap, thin, sourish wine, which was a common drink amongst the poorer classes and soldiers.

A reed—i.e., a cane.

37. Our LORD died literally from a broken heart. 'In a death from rupture of the heart the hand is carried to the front of the chest, and a piercing shriek uttered. The hands of

38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

39 ¶ And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;

41 (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

42 ¶ And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,

JESUS were nailed to the cross, but the appalling shriek is recorded' (Geikie's 'Life of Christ,' vol. ii., p. 541).

38. Veil of the Temple. The veil of blue, scarlet, and purple, which separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. The high-priest passed through this veil only once a year, on the day of Atonement, and in the Holy of Holies, or sanctuary, found himself before the presence of GOD (compare Exod. 25. 8: 'Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them'). And so our LORD, the great High-Priest who offered Himself, entered into the presence of GOD 'through the veil, that is to say, his flesh' (Heb. 10. 20), and made the atonement for all.

39. Centurion. The Roman officer in charge of the watch.

Saw that He so cried out, etc. The translation should be: 'Saw that He so gave up His spirit, he said, Truly this man was GOD'S SON.' In St. John 19. 7, 8, we read: 'The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the SON of GOD [GOD'S SON]. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid.' The expression may also have been heard by this centurion, and now that he had witnessed all the awful circumstances attending the death of JESUS—the mysterious darkness, His seven sayings, the loud cry, etc.—the conviction came home to him that the claim of JESUS was true.

40. Mary Magdalene. A woman of Magdala, from whom our LORD had cast seven devils. It is unfortunate that she is usually spoken of as being the sinner mentioned in St. Luke 7. 36, 50. There is no ground for supposing she was the same person, or that she had ever lived an immoral life. We cannot be too careful how we speak of the dead, for if they are in paradise, we hope, by God's grace, to meet them.

Mary the mother of James, etc. Sister of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Salome. Wife of Zebedee, and mother of the Apostles James and John.

42. When the even was come. The Sabbath began at sunset, and it would defile the ceremonial purity of that day, especially as it was the great Passover Sabbath, to allow a corpse to be unburied. (But see note on Chapter 14, verse 16.)

43 Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

44 And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead : and calling *unto him* the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.

45 And when he knew *it* of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him *in* the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Joses beheld where he was laid.

CHAPTER 16

AND when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early in the morning the first *day* of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

43. Joseph of Arimathæa. He was, probably, a member of the great council of the Jews, the Sanhedrin. He was a 'good man and a just' (St. Luke 23. 50), and, bearing in mind the ancient prophecies, was looking for the Messiah's kingdom. In St. Luke 23. 51, we are told that he had not consented to the counsel and doing of the rest of the Jewish rulers in respect to **JESUS**.

Craved the body of Jesus—that is, 'begged.' As a rule, criminals were buried in the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna), amidst the refuse of the city and offal which was there burned.

44. Already dead. Death by crucifixion was a lingering one. It did not take place sometimes until three days of agony had been endured. In this case the malefactors had their legs broken in order to kill them. When they came to our **LORD** He was already dead, but to make sure, a soldier pierced His side with a spear (St. John 19. 34), and forthwith there came out 'blood and water.' This showed that the heart had been ruptured.

46. It was the custom of the Jews to embalm the body of the dead. The purpose in which this was done was to prevent decay, as if the future life demanded that we should have the same material particles which we possess here. From St. John 19. 39, we see that Joseph obtained the help of Nicodemus (St. John 3. 1), and together they wrapped the body of **JESUS** in linen with a mixture of myrrh and aloes. A great stone was then rolled to cover up the opening of the tomb, which was a small cave hewn out of the solid rock, and the watch-guard of Roman soldiers took up their station before the sepulchre to prevent the body from being stolen away (St. Matt. 27. 65, 66).

1. These loving women had come to complete the embalming which had been hastily attempted by Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus.

2. This was on Sunday morning, the first 'LORD's Day.'

3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre ?

4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away : for it was very great.

5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment ; and they were affrighted.

6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted : Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified : he is risen ; he is not here : behold the place where they laid him.

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee : there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre ; for they trembled and were amazed : neither said they any thing to any man ; for they were afraid.

9 ¶ Now when *Jesus* was risen early the first *day* of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

3. They were probably unaware of the fact that the stone had been sealed, and that there was a guard of soldiers watching the tomb.

5. **A young man.** In St. Luke 24. 4 we read of 'two men'; in St. Matt. 28. 2, 5, we read 'an angel.' The three accounts are not contradictory. Angels (messengers from God) usually appear in the form of man ; there is *one* mentioned in this Gospel, but that does not preclude there being two.

7. **Tell . . . Peter.** The words imply more than appears. It must have been a great relief to Peter when he received this message, for he had denied his LORD, and did not yet know whether he was forgiven. But this plain injunction to bear the glad news to him specially would convey also the assurance of forgiveness, for would his Master single him out and send such a message unless He had freely pardoned him ?

9-20. The two oldest Greek MSS. omit these last verses, and another ending has been found to this Gospel. The reasons for supposing they were added by another writer are as follows :

(1) The difference in style.

(2) There is no detailed account of events as in other portions of this Gospel.

(3) There are twenty-one words and expressions which are not used elsewhere by St. Mark.

Of course, this ending may have been made many years afterwards by St. Mark himself. When we get older we use many words and expressions different from those we employed in our younger days. If this were the case with St. Mark, the new words and the change of style would be explained. At any rate, it does not much matter. Whoever added these last few verses, there is no reason to doubt what he says.

6-12. **THE RESURRECTION.** The accounts of the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST are given in the last chapters of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and the last two chapters of

10 *And* she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

12 ¶ After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.

St. John. The different appearances of our LORD before the ascension are as follows :

(1) To the women who came to the sepulchre.

(2) To Mary Magdalene.

(3) To St. Peter.

(4) To the two disciples going to Emmaus.

(5) To the eleven Apostles as they sat at meat.

(All these occurred on the first day of the week—the actual day of the resurrection.)

(6) To the Apostles, with a special proof to Thomas.

(7) In Galilee, to seven Apostles.

(8) To the eleven Apostles.

From St. Paul's account in 1 Cor. 15. 6, 7, we see there was an appearance to five hundred brethren at once.

(9) Then to St. James.

(10) The last time was at Jerusalem, just before the ascension ; this is mentioned in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

Altogether there were at least ten separate appearances, and may have been more.

A very instructive observation may be made as to the nature of our LORD's resurrection body previous to the ascension. His body manifests powers which we do not read of before ; He appears and disappears in a way which points to the possession of a body which is not of flesh *as we know it*. Some change had passed over Him, so that even Mary Magdalene for a moment fails to recognise Him ; this also applies to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. On the other hand, He eats before them ; He tells Thomas to touch His side ; He bears the marks of the crucifixion. His body seems to be earthly, flesh, yet possesses powers which stamp it as spiritual. What is the explanation ? It is not proposed to attempt a full one, but we call attention to the fact that our LORD gave exactly what was necessary for the proof of His resurrection. Notice the two alternatives : if our LORD had appeared with what was considered to be a purely spiritual body, intangible (that cannot be touched), and without the ordinary characteristics of an earthly body, His disciples would have said it was His ghost or spirit. They already believed in the existence of ghosts, and knew that there had been appearances of human beings after death, as ghosts or spirits. But if our LORD had appeared with His body having its ordinary limitations (without any fresh powers), they would have thought it was merely a remarkable case of revival from death. It would have been on a par with, or not much more wonderful than, the raising up of Lazarus.

13 And they went and told *it* unto the residue : neither believed they them.

14 ¶ Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

The nature of our LORD's body during these appearances was, therefore, just what was required to prove the fact of His resurrection—a rising again. And it is this which is distinctive of Christianity : it teaches the resurrection of the body. Other religions teach another life after the grave ; *Christ proved a rising again with our own body*. Not that the term ' own body ' implies that we shall have the exact same material particles as before ; it is hardly necessary to say that the material particles of our body are daily being lost and their places supplied with fresh ones. Our identity is not bound up with certain material particles. On the other hand, it is an unspeakable comfort to know that we shall each have our own body at the resurrection, for in this way we are sure of recognition in the life which is to come.

Apart from the records of our LORD's resurrection in the Gospels, we have the following confirmations of this fact :

(1) The living voice of the Church has always handed down the same story of the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST. It was upon this *fact* that the Church was so surely grounded.

(2) The LORD's Day—Sunday, or the first day of the week—is a continual commemoration of the resurrection of the LORD. Nothing can explain the change from the Sabbath (Saturday) as the day of rest to Sunday except the fact that on that day Christians met together to worship because it was the LORD's Day—*i.e.*, the day on which their LORD rose from the dead.

(3) The Apostles and the earliest disciples imperilled their lives, we might say not only recklessly, but with the greatest joy, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST. They did so because to die meant to be with their LORD. Their knowledge of our LORD's resurrection was the fact which emboldened them.

(4) Christianity has revolutionised the world. There are now five hundred million Christians. There is no doubt that it is *the* religion which will gradually win its way everywhere, and it will absorb all religious folk and their religions without losing its own character. If the resurrection were not true, this stupendous structure of Christendom is built on a lie ! That would be a miracle much harder to believe than the miracle of the resurrection.

(5) Christians of all shades have always celebrated the Holy Communion. It is a rite which commemorates the *death* of CHRIST. Can anyone believe that if CHRIST's death had been the final scene this sacred rite would still have been commemorated ? The death of CHRIST, with all its horrors, with its condemnation of humanity who failed to recognise such goodness, would be a ghastly tragedy which all would gladly forget.

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Moreover, this awful end of Jesus and His heart-rending cry on the cross would, but for one thing, plunge us into utter despair. Men might well say, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,' if death were the final scene in JESUS CHRIST'S life. But it was the fact of the resurrection, the fact which was well known, and since then always faithfully held, which made men full of hope, and which caused them to commemorate the death of CHRIST, for *they knew that His death opened the gate to everlasting life.*

When we add the direct testimony of the Gospel narratives to the above evidence, there is no doubt that the fact of our LORD'S resurrection has stronger grounds for its truth than any fact of ancient history, and as strong testimony in its favour as the majority of facts of later history—facts which no one dreams of questioning.

12. Unto two of them. The two disciples on their way to Emmaus (St. Luke 24. 13, etc.).

Residue—'the rest.'

14. Their unbelief. This is the third time we find a reference to the unbelief of the disciples. All through the Gospel narrative the same picture is presented of our LORD'S followers as men slow to believe. Yet so extraordinary is the prejudice with which the resurrection of our LORD is treated by those who will not believe, that we read the following remarks in Renan's 'Life of Jesus,' chap. 26: 'The cry "He is risen!" quickly spread amongst the disciples. Love caused it to find ready credence everywhere. . . . Let us say, however, that the strong imagination of Mary Magdalen played an important part in this circumstance.'

This only shows what distortion of truth the foes of our creed are obliged to employ. For if there is one thing certain, it is this: the resurrection of our LORD did *not* find a ready credence (belief) everywhere, and imagination was singularly wanting in His disciples. Renan was a most brilliant and clever writer against Christianity; there is no need, therefore, to notice less able men who have his views. It may not be amiss to quote a comment from a most excellent book entitled 'In Relief of Doubt,' by R. E. Welsh: 'Renan thinks Paul may have preached the resurrection, knowing it to have been a fraud. Strange man, Paul! Strange people in these ancient days, glad to trudge far, and suffer the lash and the loss of all things, and ready to be killed, all for the love of a fraud!'

15. Go ye into all the world, etc. These are our marching orders. Missionary work is not a debatable question to a Christian; it is simply a matter of obeying his LORD. There is, however, a most important point which ought to be observed.

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe ; In my name shall they cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ;

18 They shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them : they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Mighty and vast nations, like the Japanese and the Chinese, are coming to the front. Christian nations will, at no very distant date, find themselves bound to reckon with these people. Whether they are to be met in the sphere of commerce, or in the ordinary intercourse between nations, it will tend to render such intercourse smooth and satisfactory if they have become Christian nations. If we should have (unhappily) to know them in war, it will be something gained if warfare is waged on *both* sides in a Christian spirit—that is, as far as Christianity can alleviate the horrors of what is really a most unchristian business. Anyhow, there can be no doubt that if *all* nations were Christian, and strove to act up to their religion, intercourse between them would be the easier for it, and eventually war would be impossible.

16. He that believeth and is baptized. If a man believes, he will surely give this first testimony of his faith—receiving baptism. In the Acts of the Apostles over and over again we read that when anyone professed belief, the first step was baptism. There is a very remarkable case mentioned in Acts 10. Cornelius and his friends heard the Word, and the HOLY GHOST fell upon them. 'Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the HOLY GHOST as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of JESUS CHRIST' (Acts 10. 47, 48). Here the gift of the HOLY GHOST comes first, but Peter does not think this an argument for doing away with baptism : on the contrary, he evidently reasons, 'God has performed His part ; we must not neglect ours ; therefore, let them be baptized.'

Shall be damned. The translation should be 'shall be condemned.' It is obvious that these words do not apply to those who have never heard the Gospel (see Rom. 10. 14). No one can believe that which he has never heard. In St. Matt. 25 we have the Parable of the Talents, which teaches us that we shall be held responsible for our opportunities and gifts ; this includes our opportunities for right belief, and our capacity for receiving true doctrine. In verse 31 to the end there is a picture of the judgment of *all nations*. From this we see that the criterion or test by which all mankind will be judged will be deeds of love. This chapter should be carefully read in connexion with this sixteenth verse of St. Mark. It is a noteworthy remark that if a man is insincere it does not matter what he believes or disbelieves. But in proportion as he is earnest and sincere, so is it of greater importance what he believes ; for with the sincere their belief influences their every thought, word, and act.

19 ¶ So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

17, 18. For a fulfilment of this promise, see Acts of the Apostles in the following chapters: 2, 3, 8, 10, 16, 19, 28.

19. The ascension of our LORD is also described in St. Luke 24. 50, and the Acts of the Apostles 1. 9. The sitting at the right hand of GOD signifies that JESUS CHRIST occupies the post of honour in the heavens; He has taken our humanity as near to the FATHER as is possible, and there 'He ever liveth to make intercession for us' (Rom. 8. 34, and Heb. 7. 25). His redemption once made is still in effect going on. His care and love for us is as earnest as when He trod this earth, and He sends His HOLY SPIRIT to each faithful soul in order to cause His likeness to be wrought within.

20. Preached everywhere. Christianity had spread from Jerusalem to Babylon (the greatest city in the East) and to Rome, the capital of the Empire in the West, before the siege of Jerusalem. In St. Mark's own generation the Gospel was preached in the great centres of the known civilised world.

With signs following. We do not know when miracles ceased; it is customary to suppose that they came to an end with the last of the Apostles. The miracles of CHRIST are now to be found in the spiritual sphere. The spiritually blind receive sight, and moral lepers are cleansed by the grace of GOD in CHRIST JESUS our LORD. And thus it will ever be unto the end of the world. The gracious invitation rings through the ages: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (St. Matt. 11. 28). And the sin-stained, the sorrow-stricken, the poor tortured souls harassed with life's enigmas—all find rest at the feet of JESUS. Amen.

THE END

INDEX

*The numbers refer to the pages, and give one of the chief references,
not every reference.*

ABOMINATION of desolation, 85

A.D., 13

Adultery, 53

Advent, 84

Alabaster, 89

Andrew, 30

Angels, 17, 18

Anointing, 46

Apocryphal, 8

Ascension, 112

Atonement, 73

Authorised Version, 10

Baptism, 111

 of infants, 69

 of John, 14

Barabbas, 100

Bartholomew, 31

Bartimæus, 73

Baskets, 49, 55

Beelzebub, 32

Bethany, 88

Blasphemy, 24

Brethren of the LORD, 33

Cæsar, 79, 100

Capernaum, 19

Carpenter, 44

Catechism, 80

Ceremonies, 51

Charger, 46

CHRIST, 14, 58

Church, 11, 12, 36, 65, 86
 decoration, 89

Colt, 74

Corban, 52

Criticism, Higher, 4, 5, 55

Cross, 59

Crucifixion, 83, 102

Damnation, 32, 111

Date of the Gospel, 10, 14

Deacon, 72

Decapolis, 41

Disciple, 26

Dissenters, 65

Divers, 54

Divorce, 68

Doctrine, 19

Dogs, 53

Doubt, 56, 110

Elders, 77

Elect, 86

Elias, 61

Embalming, 90, 106

End of world, 87

Esaïas, 52

Eucharist, 93

Explanations, 13

Faith, 63

Fasting, 64

Festivals, 48

Fig-tree, 75

Five thousand, 49

Forms of prayer, 96

Fornication, 53

Four thousand, 57

Friday, Good, 88

Fulfilment of prophecy, 90

Gadarenes, 38

Galilee, 17

Gehenna, 66

Gethsemane, 95

Godparents, 123

Golgotha, 102

Gospel, 7

Grace, 49

Heaven, 81

Hell, 65

Herod Antipas, 46

Herodians, 29

Herodias, 46

Higher Criticism, 4, 5, 55

Holy Communion, 92, 93, 109

HOLY GHOST, 15

Honesty of Apostles, 9, 57

Hosanna, 74

Hospitality, 45

Interpretation of Bible, 11

James, 30

 Son of Alphæus, 31

Jericho, 73

JESUS, 14

John, 30

Joseph of Arimathæa, 106

Josephus, 86

Judas Iscariot, 31, 90

INDEX

- Kingdom of God, 17, 36, 59, 60,
 69, 70, 72
 Lake of Gennesaret, 37
 Lasciviousness, 53
 Last Supper, 92
 Latchet, 15
 Laws of nature, 37, 44, 76
 Leaven, 57
 Legion, 39
 Leper, 21
 Levi, 25
 Listed, 62
 LORD's day, 106, 109
 Lusts, 35

 Mark, 11
 Mary Magdalene, 105
 Matthew, 25
 Means of grace, 42
 Millstone, 66
 Minister, 72
 Miracle, 44, 51, 58, 112
 Mite, 83
 Mount of Olives, 94
 Mourning, 43
 MS., 13
 Myrrh, 102
 Mystery, 34

 Nathanael, 31
 Nazareth, 16
 Needle, 71

 Palm Sunday, 74, 83
 Palsy, 23
 Parables, 33
 Party spirit, 65
 Passover, 90, 91, 92
 Penny, 48, 89
 Peter, 30, 59, 96, 98, 99, 107
 Pharisee, 27
 Philip, 31
 Phylactery, 82
 Pilate, 90
 Prætorium, 101
 Priests, 77
 Providence, 45
 Publicans, 25

 Rabbi, 19
 Ransom, 73
 Remission, 15
 Resurrection, 107, 108, 109

 Righteous, 25
 Rock, 59
 Roof, 23
 Rulers of synagogue, 41
 Revised Version, 10

 Sabbath, 27
 Sadducees, 80
 Salome, 46
 Sanhedrin, 77
 Satan, 17
 Scourging, 101
 Scribes, 19
 Scrip, 45
 Sea of Galilee, 18, 37
 Seven words, 104
 Shewbread, 28
 Siege of Jerusalem, 86-7
 Simon, 30
 of Cyrene, 101
 the Leper, 89
 Son of David, 73, 82
 of man, 24, 58
 Soul, 60
 Spirits, evil, 20
 Sunday, 109
 Swine, 39
 Synagogue, 19

 Tabernacle, 62
 Talitha Cumi, 43
 Temple, 75, 83
 Tetrarch, 46
 Thomas, 31
 Tradition, 51
 Transfiguration, 61
 Trespass, 77
 Trinity, 11

 Unction, 46

 Veil of Temple, 105
 Verily, 32
 Verses, 60
 Vineyard, 78

 Washings, 51
 Watch, 50
 Wilderness, 14
 Winefat, 78
 Wine-skins, 26
 Wist, 62
 Worshipped, 39

 Zealots, 85

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